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NANA'S DAUGHTER.

A CONTINUATION OF AND

SEQUEL TO EMILE ZOLA'S NOVEL OF "NANA."

BY A. SIRVEN AND H. LEVERDIER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY JOHN STIRLING.

Nana's Daughter" is destined to make a deep sensation among novel-readers. It is a sequel to Zola's world-famous "Nana," but is in many respects superior to that great work. Intense and continuous action characterizes it throughout, and every page is of absorbing interest, while there is no lack of refinement and fine feeling. The aim is to show that evil instincts are not hereditary. Nana is a prominent personage in the story, but occupies a more elevated plane than Zola assigns to her. Her daughter, Andrée, is a direct contrast to her. Abandoned in infancy by her mother, she is adopted and brought up by the Naviels, an upright family belonging to the working classes. Nana finds her and strives to gain possession of her, her efforts forming the staple of the story. Andrée is tempted time and again and subjected to trials without number, but remains true to her parents by adoption, herself and her betrothed, Lucien Despretz, Lucien's courtship forming one of the most delightful love-idyls ever written. Exciting scenes follow each other in rapid succession, and the attention of the reader is so enchained that it is impossible to put down the volume, which will be read with great pleasure by every one. All the characters are vividly sketched, the plot is of unusual strength and merit, and the style of composition is vigorous and concise. The translation of "Nana's Daughter" is by John Stirling, who has done his work conscientiously and well.

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NANA'S DAUGHTER.

To Monsieur Émile Zola.

Monsieur and Dear Confrère:

In order to maintain successfully, if possible, the negative of the proposition that evil instincts are hereditary, we have borrowed the name of your heroine, Nana, so ably dissected by you in a study which, if it does not found a school, will, at least, mark an epoch. But, to render this woman more odious, we have taken her from the unrefined surroundings amid which you left her for nearly five hundred pages, and have raised her upon the shield of Parisian elegance. Her language, happily, is improved by this change. Hence, freed from those unpolished expressions which, doubtless, augmented the sensation created by your book, our work will be found rather natural than what is termed realistic.

And now, dear confrère, kindly excuse the great liberty we have taken in bestowing a daughter upon your heroine.

The sincere admirers of your genius,

Alfred Sirven and H. Leverdier.

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NANA'S DAUGHTER.

PROLOGUE.

THE Commissioner put on his spectacles, and said:

"Your name, Madame?"

"My name? All Paris knows my name, and you certainly have heard me spoken of."

"Very likely; but nevertheless, I ask who you are."

"Nana, of course!"

"But you have a family name, I presume."

"I, a family name? My dear sir, as I have never had any family, I can hardly be expected to have a family name."

"It strikes me that you understand then, better than any one else, how necessary a mother is to a child, for if yours had not abandoned you, you would have led a better life."

"You are entirely mistaken, sir. I lead the life for which I was created. Besides, why should I do for this child, what no one ever did for me?"

"Simply because you have the means of educating it, and of bringing it up — if not under your roof, at least at your expense. Your toilette is superb. You came here in your own carriage. Your servants—"

"None of all these are mine. My horses, my furniture, my jewels and my toilettes all belong to Monsieur. He bought them all; therefore they are his. He is liberal enough, but he does not like children. I have no right to keep a child in the house, have I?"

The magistrate did not reply. He was himself a little uncertain as to whether he ought not to compel this mother to keep the little creature, and whether it were just to use the finances of the *Assistance Publique* in this way. But all at once another consideration struck him. A soul had been brought to him to save. Had he any right to throw it back into the danger from which it had escaped?

This conviction strengthened, and he determined to remove the child from the influence of the mother, and in this way preserve her. His decision was soon made.

Virginie, Madame's femme de chambre, held the sleeping child in her arms.

The mother, ennuyée by these official formalities, was moving about the room. She stopped in front of a book-case, and was reading the titles now illuminated by the August sunlight, without comprehending them in the least.

The magistrate was making notes, all the time thinking of this child, whose destiny weighed on his conscience.

Nana read aloud these titles, which had a strange attraction for her:

"'*Manuel de Police Judicataire et Administrative.*' That ought to be rather amusing. I wish I was on the police force, then I might know something of what went on in the homes of other people. '*De la Police des Mœurs; Encyclopédie des Jeux.*'"

The magistrate interrupted her.

"I ought to tell you," he resumed, "that in accordance with the regulations of Administration of Hospitals, you cannot see your child, nor know where she is, and that you will hear of her only once in three months."

"Why is that, sir?"

"Because, in abandoning her, you abandon all your rights over her. The *Assistance Publique* becomes your substitute and her legal guardian. The child is an orphan, and you are dead."

"Precisely — I see — You are quite right."

"Have you her certificate of birth?"

"Yes, sir; this is it."

"Very well. Give it to me, and I will have an order made out for admission to the *Hospice des Enfants Assistés.*"

The magistrate rang, and on the appearance of his secretary, said:

"Write an order for *La Rue d'Enfer.*"

The secretary wrote, while the magistrate, in a clear, ringing voice, dictated the following:

"To the Préfecture de Police,

"1*st Division*, 5*th Bureau*,

"*Paris*, *August* 14*th*, 1860.

"The Governor of the *Hospice des Enfants Assistés* is requested to receive from bearer, and to keep for the present, an infant of the female sex, fifteen days old, having been born on the 30th of last month, and registered on the same day at the *Mairie* of the ——— Arrondissement under the name of Nanette. The mother professes inability to support this child, and it will remain with you until the Prefect of Police gives you further instructions, he having this day been notified of the facts in this case."

"Now," said the magistrate to his secretary, "copy these papers, which must go with the child. Be as quick as possible."

As he folded a paper, he said:

"Will you take the child yourself, Madame?"

"Oh! No, I do not like hospitals, and then, too, leaving the child there would not be agreeable; I should make a scene, I fear. Virginie will take it; I will pay for the carriage."

"I have no objections to make, Madame; you can do as you please."

"We can go then, I suppose? Come, Virginie. Good-morning, sir," and the magistrate bowed slightly.

Nana raised her train with a movement of serpentine grace, and left the room followed by her woman carrying the child.

In front of the door, huge English horses pawed the ground and shook their heads impatiently.

The coachman sat stiff and erect, looking neither to the right nor the left.

The livery was mousquetaire blue, as was the landau. The footman, as well as the coachman, wore knee breeches and white silk stockings.

On the doors was painted a gothic N surmounted by a coronet. A crowd had collected, as they supposed the carriage to belong to the Emperor.

When Nana appeared on the threshold, holding in one hand her train of blue faille, and allowing her satin boots with their Louis Quinze heels to be seen, a murmur of admiration arose at her beauty.

Her blonde hair glittered like an auréole around her somewhat low forehead, as low as that of a Greek statue. Her almond-shaped eyes, lined with black, were blue as a summer lake. Her nose was straight, with flexible nostrils. Her lips were full and brilliantly red, while about them lingered a half ironical expression, showing her white teeth.

Her hands were small and her gloves reached her elbow. Her hat was only a bouquet of roses, through which was thrust a dagger with an onyx handle encrusted with sapphires.

With her panther-like grace, her undulating form, her tawny hair and gleaming eyes, she stood for a moment or two in the sunlight, looking down at the pale crowd of working people, who, under the lash of hunger, were one and all toiling for their bread.

A fiacre drove past.

Nana signalled it.

The coachman stopped, and respectfully jumped from his seat to open the door.

Nana kissed the child, and there was a slight tremulousness in her voice as she said:

"Good-by, little one, good-by."

Then she added:

"Take care, Virginie, don't lose that paper."

The woman said to the coachman:

"*Rue d'Enfer*, to the Hospital."

The man clambered up to his seat again, and the fiacre disappeared around the corner.

Nana stood on the sidewalk looking after the child, which had now disappeared forever from her sight, but this inaction did not last long; her late awakened maternal affection flickered and went out. She entered her landau. The footman closed the door.

"Home," she said, briefly.

The coachman touched the necks of his horses, and the carriage rolled off toward the Boulevards, turning to the left in the direction of the Madelèine.

It was the hour when the crowd was greatest. Men, well-dressed and decorated, saluted her as she passed, and then continued their lounging walk, with an eye-glass in the eye and a cane against the lips.

Yellow rays of light coming between the tall chimneys gilded the dusty air, illuminated the windows of the houses and fell on the rich dresses of the women and on the silver mounted harnesses.

Omnibuses lumbered along, and sorry looking nags dragged shabby fiacres, while tall trotting horses with slender legs had behind them either light Victorias or solid looking coupés, in which sat bald men reading the day's report of the Bourse, while they chewed the ends of their extinguished cigars.

Nana's landau took the Boulevard Malesherbes, and went on as far as Monceaux.

Her Hôtel looked out on the Park.

This Hôtel was a marvel of elegance. The hot-houses alone cost five thousand francs each month.

The hall was ornamented with Florentine mosaics, and a double staircase of rose-colored marble had balustrades of green bronze, representing a vine clambering to the upper landing.

The first floor was lighted by large windows of stained glass, which imparted a cathedral-like aspect to this temple ornamented with exquisite statues of every description, standing in all the corners, half veiled by groups of velvety exotics.

A footman was in the hall awaiting Madame.

"Has the Marquis arrived?" she asked.

"Yes, Madame."

She dropped her train, and slowly, with haughty grace, ascended the low stairs of rose-colored marble, while the silk of her skirts made a delicious rustling sound, as they followed the serpentine undulations of her stately form.

The Marquis was waiting for her, reclining on a Turkish divan.

When Madame entered, he did not rise.

"Well!" he said, "you have got that matter settled, I suppose?"

"Yes, my dear, I have disposed of the child, and I hope you are pleased with me. Are you?"

"Of course," he answered.

She came to his side, and kneeling, kissed him lightly on the cheek. He received the kiss, but he did not return it.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked.

"Of nothing, I fancy."

"Not even of me?"

"No, not even of you!"

"And yet, I have sacrificed my child for you."

"No, Nana, do not let your imagination run away with you; you have not made this tremendous sacrifice either for the Marquis d'Albigny or for the old King. No, in your heart you laugh at us both. I know you,—you love nothing but your own beauty and this preposterous luxury with which you are surrounded—your whims and your caprices, for you are all whims."

"What! was it not to spare you any possible annoyance from the child that I sent it to the Hospital? You insisted that I—"

"Confound it all—I did not want it here, of course."

"Where is it?" said a man, who at this moment entered abruptly.

"What do you want, sir?" asked Nana harshly.

"I want my child."

"Your child! Did you mistake my house, sir, for a Foundling Hospital? Marquis, will you have the kindness to get rid of this man for me?"

"By no means, my dear; this scene strikes me as inexpressibly droll. Go on, sir; do precisely as you would if you were at home."

The stranger with folded arms was pacing the room, and mechanically followed on the carpet a ray of sunlight that streamed into the apartment.

He was tall, pale and thin. He wore a long beard, in which glistened many silvery threads. He suddenly stopped before the Marquis.

"You told me to do precisely as if I were at home, did you not, Marquis?"

"Most certainly I did."

"Very well, then, leave this room at once, or I will kill you."

"And by what right, sir, if you please?"

"This woman is the mother of my child."

"I congratulate you," sneered the Marquis.

"The man is an impostor," said Nana, coldly.

"Oh! of course," answered d'Albigny, with a sarcastic laugh.

He lifted the portière and disappeared.

The stranger stood still.

"Now, Nana," he said, "you and I will settle our accounts."

"Very well, then. Upon my word, this is too much! Did you really suppose that Nana could live forever among the clouds with you? You do not know me yet, my poor fellow. You do not yet comprehend Nana."

"Hush! some one has rang the bell."

"No, it is no one; some tradesman, or it may be the King."

"Nana, dear Nana, be good; where is our child? You have put it out to nurse have you not? I have saved ten thousand francs for the little girl, and when she is grown up it will amount to a nice little sum. Ten thousand francs, Nana! Each one of those silver pieces represents an hour of my life, a drop of

my blood, and I have brought them all to you. Give me my daughter."

"Your daughter? I have lost her."

"Lost her?"

"Abandoned her, I mean—"

"And where?"

"How do I know?"

"Where is the child?"

"I have sold her."

"To whom?"

"To some circus people."

"That is false."

"You are right, it is false; but you bore me to death. Do go away—my head aches, and I am tired."

"Here are the ten thousand francs."

"Five hundred louis. What a superb sum! If you had stolen them now—but I don't like money that has been earned by the sweat of the brow!"

"Do you mean you wish I had stolen the money?"

"I do, indeed, for that would prove that you love me better than all else."

There was a long silence.

The stranger resumed his restless pacing up and down the room, still following the sunlight on the carpet. This same streak of light now touched the bed, showed the exquisite ivory carvings set in ebony, rested on the spread of white satin embroidered with a black sphinx, and gilded the wide spread wings of a silver eagle, which from the head of the bed watched over Nana's slumbers. As the sun sank lower, the rays entered the room more and more, and showed in a remote corner, upon a malachite stand, a bronze elephant with a Chinese tower on its back.

The chairs were low and large and profusely cushioned, but their forms were lost on the shining parquette. By degrees the sunlight faded away, and only the tops of the candelabra and a bronze statue holding a globe caught the light, and were reflected in the Venetian glass with its exquisitely chiseled silver frame.

Suddenly, the stranger stood still and looked at

Nana, who had thrown herself on a lounge near the window. The dagger, with its onyx handle, had fallen upon the carpet. Her eyes were closed, and she was almost asleep, the train of her rich silk being carefully wrapped about her feet. Her attitude was perfect, and her exquisite profile stood out in the fast gathering twilight like that of a marble statue.

Her parted lips wore almost a smile. The stranger kneeled at her feet, and said with trembling lips:

"Then, Nana, if I had stolen this money for you, you would still love me a little?"

She laughed aloud.

"Who can tell? I am weary of all these people whom I see constantly. Listen! Do you know what I was thinking the other day? I should like an admirer who had assassinated some one on my account. I should like him to be arrested in my presence and executed at once!"

"Where on earth do you get these repulsive ideas? You are perverted by all this luxury I see about you. Take your child and leave this house. It is not yet too late. Each kiss you press on her innocent face will make you better!"

"Poor fellow!"

"Come with me; you know how happy we were when we were down there in the country. We will go far away with the little one. I have money enough to live some time. Will you come?"

"Leave me, I tell you. I supped too heavily last night, and did not sleep late enough this morning. Go! I say. Do you want me to tell you again that I don't want your money?"

"Very well then, since you insist on knowing it, the money that I have brought you is not mine."

"What are you saying?"

"Just what I mean. I took it from my employer. I knew you would not go with me, but I wanted to buy my child, to save her from you!"

"And you committed a theft for that? Very good. For eight days you have haunted my steps, and it was

for this, then? You are a wretch! If you wish to educate your daughter, educate her. Now leave me or my lackeys shall put you out."

He stooped, and picked up the dagger with the onyx handle, which lay on the carpet.

"Do not ring, Nana, do not denounce me—to-morrow I will put back the money—do not say anything about it; I did not know what I was doing."

His hand clutched the onyx handle.

Nana pushed him aside with the strength of a panther. "Do you think to frighten me with that toy? Keep it. I will make you a present of it."

She rang the bell.

A servant appeared.

"Show this gentleman out," she said.

"*Au revoir*, Madame," murmured her visitor.

"By no means," answered Nana, with her insolent laugh. "It is farewell, if you please."

He went out.

Nana called to the lackey:

"Follow that man," she said, hurriedly, "and have him arrested. I will not be tormented in this way!"

The man hesitated.

"Make haste!" repeated his mistress; "do you not understand what I say? He is a thief, I tell you."

The valet disappeared behind the portière, and Nana heard him hastily running down the marble stairs.

It was growing dark. The clock struck seven.

"Oh!" she murmured, "it is time for the King, and I am not ready!"

She rang for her maid, who had just come from the Hospital.

Virginie entered.

"Ah! you have come! Well?"

"It is all right, Madame."

"It had to be!" answered Nana, with a light sigh. "Light up quickly, and dress my hair. I am expecting His Majesty."

NANA'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

ANDRÉE AT SCHOOL.

IT was September. The School in *La Rue Croisatière* was celebrating its re-opening. The old pupils had all brought to the Directress a souvenir of their holidays, and the day of which we write was the first of the scholastic year.

Madame Lafrançois had served for her pupils a frugal breakfast of pork chops, *œufs à la neige*, cakes, strawberries and chocolate cream. The young faces around the table were gay and happy; eyes and mouths were widely opened.

One little girl, a pretty blonde of ten, said aloud: "I wish I could live on eggs and cream, I do not like meat."

"My child," answered Madame Lafrançois, "you need all your strength, and you must build yourself up in order that, in two or three years' time, you may be able to aid your parents by your work."

Madame Lafrançois was a woman of forty, who must have been very beautiful in her youth, but the severity of her perpetual black robe with its straight and clinging folds, the austerity of her smooth bands of hair, and more especially her blue spectacles which guarded her feeble sight from the light, would have inspired her "dear girls," as she called them, with respect mingled with fear, but for the gentle sweetness of her voice.

She was goodness itself toward her pupils, and

treated them with a certain serious dignity which in no way repressed them. She participated in their games, but generally managed to combine improvement with recreation. Her method of teaching consisted in arousing the mental abilities of the girls by appealing to their intelligence rather than to their memories.

She wished to form thinking beings, true women capable of loving deeply and with devotion, but not blindly. She meant them to know how and why, and did not allow them to follow the dictates of mere instinct.

She had only one fault—a weakness for Andrée, the pretty blonde who had spoken of her liking for cream and eggs.

Andrée Naviel was wonderfully pretty, the type of a Parisian child, delicate looking, with a certain easy grace, a slow, deliberate way of speaking, a ringing voice, and large, clear blue eyes. She was the daughter of a machinist employed in a foundry, and of his wife who made artificial roses at Paillardin's.

The child was quick to understand works of Art and of Imagination, but for arithmetic she entertained the most profound horror. "The fact is, Madame," she said, "figures make me feel as if ants had got into my brain!" She invariably relapsed into dreams and reveries, whenever Madame Lafrançois undertook to explain to her the mysteries of multiplication, which form of arithmetic is supposed to be somewhat necessary to housekeepers. She did not believe in evil, and might easily do wrong without suspecting it. This peculiarity might later be the rock on which she would founder, and Madame Lafrançois was greatly disturbed by Andrée's faith in every one, and endeavored to put her on her guard against the many dangers which she, as a matter of course, must encounter when she entered the world. She pointed out to the child the perils to which her ignorance and her audacity must alike expose her, and dwelt on the colorless life which a woman who earns her bread must necessarily lead.

But all this was in vain. Andrée determined to see nothing but poetry and light.

The child's gift was a bouquet of roses made by Madame Naviel and copied from Nature. Madame Lafrançois placed this bouquet in a vase of Japanese faience in the centre of the table.

The walls of the class-room were hung with maps and with other work done by the pupils who had taken prizes, and formed a most interesting collection. There were crayon drawings, flowers painted in water colors, painted china, and fans both of wood and ivory.

This little collection of the older pupils inspired the new comers with the ambition to do as well or better.

This school of Madame Lafrançois was one of those known as Professional Schools, where the lessons of the afternoon are intended to teach them some trade, by which a young girl can earn her bread at home.

They received lessons in china painting and on silk fans. They were taught to make artificial flowers and to embroider in the most exquisite fashion.

Those who had voices were taught to sing, but useful things were more especially attended to.

At the end of dessert there was a little incident which was especially calculated to appeal to these youthful imaginations.

A cage was brought in filled with birds and placed in the centre of the table where Andrée's bouquet had stood, and the Instructress, lifting her hand, enjoined silence.

"My children," she said, "there are among you several Alsaciennes whose parents, having chosen France, have been driven from their native land by the invaders. Some among your compatriots have sided with the invaders, preferring comfort to liberty, material security to the welfare of their country.

"These birds are about to give you their opinions on this subject. Their country is Heaven and Liberty.

"Andrée, my child, scatter these seeds and cake and sugar near their cage."

Andrée, who was very serious, quietly obeyed.

"And now open the door of the cage."

Three pairs of little hands eagerly unfastened the

door. The windows of the class-room opened on the recreation court, in the centre of which stood a tall poplar tree, the leaves of which quivered in the fresh breeze.

The little crowd of children waited in profound silence. A male sparrow with a black head had perched on the open door. He looked out of the corner of his eye at the dainties before him, but his good sense won the day — he shook his head and spread his gray wings, and was gone through the open casement.

The example thus given, the others followed. There was a general flight and a merry chirping among the little creatures outside.

Madame Lafrançois closed the cage, and said:

"This prison is forever useless to us. We will sell it, and with the money we receive for it, we will buy seeds to throw to the liberated birds."

After breakfast, the whole school went to Saint Cloud by boat, which was the great feature of the fête. The sun was shining on the damp grass in the Jardin des Plantes, while beyond, the towers of Notre Dame stood out against a sky where the clouds were passing away after a heavy shower. The huge piles of masonry looked, between the two arms of the river, like the formidable skeleton of some beast left there after the deluge.

The boat passed through the shadows of the towers, passed under the *Pont Neuf*, the galleries of the Louvre, the Tuileries, the ruins of *la Cour des Comptes*, and then turned a little to the left to reach the *Pont du Jour*.

They stopped at the foot of the viaduct to land some passengers, and then went swiftly on.

Saint Cloud appeared before them a little to the right, on an eminence half concealed amid trees, and by the well wooded undulations of the hills around it, from among which rose heavy clouds of smoke, marking the passage of the various trains which ran to Versailles.

As soon as Bellancourt was reached, the little party heard the confused noises of the Fair to which they were going, and the nearer they got to Saint Cloud, the louder became the discordant symphony of shouting clowns and boasting Hercules, the cries of the peddlers and showmen, and the incessant undercurrent of the murmuring crowd, like a heavy bass.

At the foot of the bridge the boat stopped. Madame Lafrançois watched her girls land, and followed them through the crowd, marching as a rear guard to pick up stragglers. But as Andrée Naviel was at the head of the column, it frequently broke, for she ran from one thing to another — from a swing to a Russian railroad, from a tilt to a lottery, with frank exclamations of joy and wonder. But the thing she particularly wished to see, was a circus ring, where the strong men were performing. The bronze nudity of their biceps, amused her immensely. The women too in their short skirts, interested her greatly.

For more than a year Andrée had been full of strange whims. She had fancies and caprices, like those of a Bohemienne or a Mountebank, and evinced, like most Parisian children, an inordinate desire to be noticed and to be admired.

A certain unconscious coquetry was shown in all her movements. But with all this she was gentle, sweet and loving, not in the least understanding why she was lectured for her many inconsequent acts. Her enthusiasm was not to be controlled; she wept and laughed without knowing why, and was eager in the pursuit of the happiness she was either to receive or to give.

She was a strange little girl — already a woman in some respects, and in others, altogether too much of a child—ignoring almost everything serious, which those who loved her felt anxious that she should understand, and throwing everything else aside. To a keen observer, Andrée Naviel would have offered the great attraction of mystery.

Her parents were honest working people, intelligent and skilled in their trades, people of irreproachable

honesty, of good common sense and utterly without imagination, loving order and regularity — in short, they belonged to that good, solid class, whose robust muscles and well-controlled nerves, produce as a rule a generation of children physiologically different from this frail Andrée, in whom seemed to be combined two totally antagonistic natures.

Madame Lafrançois thought much and seriously of the future of this child. She asked herself if the austere example of the Naviels would suffice to restrain this wandering imagination within bonds, and repress this precocious curiosity by which she was herself often startled and dismayed. But the natural sweetness of Andrée, her fear of doing wrong, and her profound repentance when she thought she had grieved her kind teacher, or any one whom she loved, soon reassured her; but her interest in the child was excessive — her aristocratic face and bearing, which seemed to set her apart from the people, interested her like a problem.

Whenever she went out with the child, she was uneasy and always kept her as closely at her side as possible, and on the day of which we write, she was greatly disturbed at seeing all her pupils scattered through the crowd. After a little, however, they reached a comparatively empty space, and Madame Lafrançois was able to reassemble her flock again.

She glanced quickly around the circle, to see that they were all there.

"Where is Andrée?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"We do not know, Madame," answered several of the pupils together. "We thought she was with you."

"Heaven grant that no harm has come to the child!" she cried. "You all wait here for me, I am going to look for her. Remember, no one of you is to move from this spot."

And Madame Lafrançois went around the grounds, half running, and becoming more and more excited, asking questions at the various booths, at the tilt, and at every place which was likely to interest a child.

Sometimes, the people whom she jostled as she hurried past, pushed her rudely aside, taking this woman, in her black dress and blue spectacles, for an insane person; more than once some insulting epithet was shouted after her, which, however, she did not hear.

Exhausted and out of breath, despairing and heart-sick, good Madame Lafrançois returned to the place where she had left her other pupils, but Andrée had not appeared.

Then she recalled all the stories she had heard of children stolen by Mountebanks, in order to be trained to their profession, and who, led from Fair to Fair, ended by becoming accustomed to this kind of nomadic life, and to its shameless vagabondage.

Then sadly, with an aching heart, she took her pupils back to Paris. She indulged in the hope that Andrée, having lost her companions, had returned to the house of her parents; but on reaching her school, she met on the very threshold Madame Naviel who, in her best attire, had come for her daughter.

She had been presented with three tickets for the circus, and as Andrée adored horses and gymnastic feats, the excellent mother had come for her that they might enjoy the pleasure together.

"Where is the child?" she said to Madame Lafrançois.

The Instructress, deadly pale, looked at the mother, in whose face already appeared a certain anxiety.

"What have you done with my child?" persisted Madame Naviel.

Madame Lafrançois had not strength to reply, but burst into tears.

CHAPTER II.

ANDRÉE AT THE FAIR.

WHEN Andrée discovered that she was alone, she spent considerable time in looking for her comrades, and for good Madame Lafrançois, who she knew would be excessively anxious at her disappearance.

But the various attractions about her, the noise and gay confusion, the Mountebanks and Charlatans, the man with the learned seals, and the three legged woman soon put everything else out of her mind.

First she stopped before a parti-colored tent bedizened with gay flags, which lighted up the whole avenue.

The fountains were playing, and this was in itself a marvellous sight. The spray rose in feathery masses, and cascades fell in clear sheets, while afar off stood the tall chestnut trees, the golden glory of the setting sun shining through the branches and leaves browned by the summer's heat.

Near the fountains were the wooden horses, moving to the sound of trumpets. Among the crowd of young people, happy and gay, were three young girls. Andrée wished she could join them and ride with them, on the wooden horses, but she had only just money enough to take her back to Paris.

Near by was a long covered wagon, at the door of which a man in a velvet coat invited every one to come in and see his "beautiful Irma."

"You must not go without seeing Irma," he cried in a voice of great earnestness. "You must not die until you have seen Irma!"

Andrée felt a vague desire to be Irma, the beauty of beauties, who could be seen for two sous.

She repressed a sigh, and continued to wander

among the crowd, pursued by unconscious regret for her poverty and by the hoarse cry of the man.

"You must not die without seeing Irma!"

The child stopped before a platform on which a wrestling match had just come to an end. A spectacle which here met her eyes for the first time, nearly took her breath away.

Upon the platform, a poor devil in a Pierrot costume was acting a little scene with a Hercules. The contrast between the two men to Andrée was most startling.

The Hercules was short, brawny and hideous, the full lipped bestiality of his red face heightened by his violent exercise. His uncovered arms, the color of bronze, were tattooed above the biceps. The muscles of his limbs and of his massive neck stood out like ropes. He looked around him with grim ferocity, his eyes veined with red were set deep in the shadow of heavy brows, while his forehead disappeared under a shock of coarse hair much streaked with gray.

The Pierrot was a head taller than the Hercules, his hollow cheeks whitened with flour, his reddened eyes and emaciated face, his long slender hands and thin frame, almost lost in the amplitude of his costume, inspired Andrée with intense curiosity and sympathy.

The dialogue was mingled with kicks and with very sorry jests.

Pierrot seemed to Andrée, the incarnation of mind which laughs at brute force, and the Hercules, like the incarnation of brute force avenging itself. Blows rained down on Pierrot, and resounded upon his back.

And these were not blows to be laughed at either, for there was an absolute avalanche of slaps on first one poor powdered cheek and then the other, which often threw the clown flat on the platform.

The crowd thought this excessively funny, but Andrée had never seen anything so revolting. Her heart swelled with compassion for this poor battered being. Finally, the Hercules gave Pierrot a kick of such vigor that he was lifted from the platform, and thrown over the railing among the crowd.

The poor fellow tumbled almost at Andrée's feet. A universal shout of laughter went up from the crowd, and this shout was echoed from each avenue, even the cascade repeated in its silvery notes these joyous sounds.

The Hercules was applauded and Pierrot, as he rose with difficulty, was loudly hissed. Andrée went up to him, as he went limping away.

"You are hurt, sir," she said in her fresh, young voice, trembling from head to foot with timidity as she spoke.

The clown stopped, startled by this one kind voice among the universal hisses.

He looked at the pretty child, and his pale face was irradiated by a strange expression of tenderness.

"No, my child," he answered, "I am not hurt; it is my way of earning my living, besides. Each man has his trade. I am called '*Face-à-Claques*.' Some men receive decorations, whereas I receive cuffs and blows, and it will be just the same so long as my uncle in America lives. Is not that so, Monsieur Hercules?"

"Of course it is, Monsieur *Face-à-Claques*—of course it is," answered the Hercules in his coarse voice, as he stood in the attitude of a fighting gladiator, with his arms folded and his legs set far apart.

Andrée answered, with the frankness of a child:

"I should prefer to see you work."

"You are quite right, little one," said the pale man, familiarly; "but I can't get honest work to do, you see, and unfortunately, one must eat — even I must do that, though I confess I don't look much like it."

This odd dialogue between the clown and the child, interested the crowd, who quickly formed a circle around them. The Hercules thundered out:

"Well! Monsieur *Face-à-Claques*, do you intend to stay down there all night?"

"I am coming, Monsieur Hercules, I am coming," answered the Pierrot, who continued hastily, addressing Andrée: "How happens it that you are alone here? Where is your mother?"

"In Paris, with my father. I came here with my comrades; but I have lost them—"

"When do you propose to finish your gossip, White Face?" shouted the Hercules.

"I am coming, sir. Would you like to see the play?" continued Pierrot to Andrée; "I will give you a good seat."

The child's cheeks flushed with joy.

"Say yes, can't you? I have some cakes for you too, if you will have them."

"Thanks, Monsieur Pierrot," answered Andrée, kindly. "I should like to see the play; but as for the cakes, you had better keep them for your own children."

"My children! I have none now. I once had a little girl, who would now be about your age; but when she was a week old, I saw her no more—she was taken away from me, and I have never seen her since."

"Who took her away?"

"Her mother — a wretch of a woman, a—"

Face-à-Claques was here interrupted, for the Hercules, descending from the platform, had taken him by the ear, and now led him away.

"Don't tear off my ear, Monsieur Hercules, for it would never grow again on me; while with you, strong as you are, it is very different. I dare say, under the same circumstances, yours would grow again."

The Hercules did not understand, but he laughed with an air of great superiority.

Then Pierrot said something in a low voice.

"Good!" answered the athlete. "Come on!" he continued, addressing Andrée.

"Come and see the play, little one," added the clown.

Andrée, in considerable agitation, hurried up the steps of the tent. Pierrot took her by the hand and gave her an excellent seat in the front row, and the orchestra began to play furiously. A tall, thin woman, tanned by exposure to sun and wind, played the big drum and cymbals, another performed on the piston,

while a musician with long hair of a dirty blond—the hair of a needy German — blew his clarionet with the grave and haughty air of an unhappy virtuoso.

During the concert, *Face-à-Claques* and Hercules outside, bandied words and jokes for the delectation of the crowd, varied by taunts and challenges from the athlete to any adventurous amateur.

Through the entrance, the crowd outside could be seen. Near the basin, under a red umbrella, a pastry-cook, wearing an oddly shaped cap of gilt paper, extended to the children a bit of gingerbread tied to the end of a flexible branch. This gingerbread was to belong to the boy who succeeded in catching it with his teeth. All around this man was a mass of little faces, with open mouths. The curious stopped to see the end of this experiment, which was a new kind of fishing for them.

The wrestlers' tent was rapidly filling up, and the orchestra went inside and took their seats. People were becoming impatient, and it was buzzed about that a gentleman had made a bet of a thousand louis that he would throw the Hercules. It was for this man then that they were waiting, for every seat was full.

Presently there was a little stir. A woman with very light hair, sparkling with diamonds and covered with lace, entered the arena, and stood surrounded by her little circle of men of all ages.

"Bring some chairs, *Face-à-Claques!*" shouted the Hercules, "and move quickly, too!"

The clown stood utterly transfixed, stupefaction and terror written on his face. Suddenly he threw back his head and answered:

"No, sir. Madame may seat herself wherever she pleases, for all me."

"It is very strange," murmured the blonde. "I have certainly heard that voice somewhere."

Pierrot's refusal was so decided, that Hercules concluded that it was hardly worth while to resist.

"As you will, my good friend," he muttered, resigning himself; "but you shall pay for this, later!"

The clown shrugged his shoulders.

"Which of these gentlemen desires to measure himself with me?" asked the athlete.

"I do," replied a man who was no longer young.

"Bravo! Marquis, bravo!" clamored his companions.

"Hush!" said the amateur. "I do not see the necessity of placing my name and my title at the head of the articles the morning papers will contain."

"Monsieur had best take off his coat," said the athlete.

The contest commenced with several feints. Arms were intertwined, but the grasp of each was quickly broken, and the adversaries stood opposite each other, each firm on his feet. The real combat had not yet begun; as yet only a skirmish had taken place. But suddenly they rushed forward.

Hercules seized the Marquis; but that gentleman quickly turned, and presented his back to his opponent; then raising his arms, he clasped them around the man's neck and made one superhuman effort. The athlete raised from the ground, leaped over the head of the Marquis and came down on his feet.

The crowd applauded frantically; but Andrée comprehended nothing of what she saw. She had heard a clown refuse to bring a chair to this golden-haired lady, who was as dazzling as a fairy. She saw a man, whose friends addressed him as Marquis, enter a ring to wrestle with a vulger athlete, at a Fair. She was almost stupefied, but, at the same time, interested in *Face-à-Claques*, whose tall form and pale face she perceived on the other side of the arena. The expression of his face seemed to have suddenly changed. A terrible and mysterious passion was but indifferently concealed under the mask of powder.

Andrée's attention was for the moment distracted. The contest, suspended for an instant, now re-commenced very seriously.

The athletes grasped each other at the same moment, shoulder against shoulder, and cheek against cheek.

They stood thus for a moment, panting like savage beasts, waiting each to take advantage of the other.

The amateur turned pale. The red face of the Hercules became purple. Suddenly he broke away. The Marquis fell on one knee. The other attempted to grasp him; but the Marquis rose as if touched by a spring, and with a violent blow of his back in the stomach of the other, threw him on his left side; and then leaping upon him with all his weight, pressed him down upon the sand. The shoulders of the Hercules had touched.

"Hurrah! bravo!" shouted the crowd.

The victor quietly lifted a curtain and entered the mountebank's room, to dress. The Hercules followed him.

Face-à-Claques had planted himself directly behind the blonde lady, where he could look down upon her. His head was that of Death; his Pierrot garments wrapped him about like a winding sheet.

She turned and saw this apparition.

"What have you done with my child, Nana?" he asked.

"Heavens!" she replied, "where have I heard that voice?"

"In your own room, woman!" answered the clown.

At this moment, the Marquis came back.

"D'Albigny," she said, "chastise this fellow, who has insulted me."

"Yes," said the clown, "I insulted her. I asked Madame to give me the child."

"Ah!" sneered the Marquis. "By the way, my dear, is not this your thief?"

"No, Monsieur, I am not a thief, for I have returned the money; while you—"

"Don't hesitate; go on, my friend. If what you say does not suit me, I can soon silence you."

"Silence me! and why? Because I am a clown at a Fair? You, sir, wrestle in public with mountebanks, and give five louis to Hercules that he may allow you to win the victory; and as you have made

bets amounting to a thousand with your friends, you have made by your hour's work, nine hundred and ninety-five louis. Now tell me, if you please, who is the thief to-day?"

D'Albigny was deadly pale. Hercules, in the centre of the arena, was delighted that Pierrot was exposing the truth of the transaction.

"Why do you not silence your servant?" cried Nana. "Why do you allow him to insult this gentleman?"

"Excuse me, Madame, it is not in our agreement that I should interfere. As Monsieur is so strong, he can make himself respected without my assistance."

Nana turned to her adorers, but they had all disappeared as soon as they thought it likely that they should be called upon to aid her.

"Come, let us go," said the Marquis, "I have had quite enough of this. As for you, you had better take yourself out of my reach, unless you wish to be put inside a prison cell."

"And why, pray? Let us all go. The Marquis to Mazas—the *lass* to Saint-Lazare."

D'Albigny did not hear the clown's last words, for they were drowned in a formidable hiss.

"Enough! Enough!" shouted the spectators; "put the wranglers out—let them quarrel elsewhere."

"It is scandalous—perfectly scandalous—honest people are everywhere insulted under your Republic!" cried a gentleman with a much stiffened moustache, standing up in his seat as he spoke; "ought not these canaille to be sent to Nouméa?"

"Excuse me, sir, but whom do you call the canaille here?" asked Hercules.

"I was not speaking to you," answered the man with the fierce moustache, subsiding into the crowd like a Jack in the box.

"That is all I wanted to know," the athlete replied, with a roar of laughter.

Meanwhile, the woman with the blond hair had taken her departure, and *Face-à-Claques* had returned

to Andrée's side. He had bought a large cake at the pastry cook's which he offered to the child.

"Thanks, Monsieur *Face*—"

She checked herself thinking that this name was not altogether complimentary to this fantastic friend, whom she had made in the beginning of her escapade.

"Call me *Face-à-Claques*, if you will—it does me no harm, and I am used to it. My child would have been just your age, *chérie!*"

A tear made a black mark on the chalky pallor of his cheek.

Andrée was greatly impressed by hearing this poor Pierrot speak so gently to her, after having so cruelly humiliated a great Lord.

"Attention, Monsieur *Face-à-Claques*, if you please," cried Hercules. "Come and hit me."

"So I will, master," answered the clown, turning away from the child. "I only wish that I were sure you would not hit back!"

The Brothers Fiotte now appeared and gave an exhibition. These were two boys about the age of Andrée. They began by leaping through paper hoops which Hercules tossed to the clown, who held them about as high as his head.

"Passengers for the moon, up with you!" shouted the clown.

This witticism greatly amused the crowd; the two little fellows were wonderful gymnasts for their years, but at the last one of them fell on his head, and received a severe injury. He lay extended on his back deadly pale, and with the blood streaming from nose and mouth. The spectators were horrified, and a woman fainted. Some of the good people murmured that it was abominable to allow such things; that Government ought to interfere, but these very people would have been the first to grumble had the Police exercised their right of surveillance over this circus tent.

Hercules came forward to explain that owing to the accident the performance could not contiuue, and the spectators slowly dispersed.

The clown returned to Andrée, who had not moved from her seat.

"You had best go now, petite," said the man, "this is no place for you."

"Tell me, Monsieur Pierrot," asked Andrée, "is the boy much hurt?"

"No, I guess not, he will recover after a while. Go away now, petite."

It was quite dark within the circus, but outside, the yellow light of the lamps was to be seen through the striped coverings of the booths. From the screened corner where the mountebanks were dressing, Andrée heard a hoarse voice say:

"Now, come here, and I will settle with you!"

Childish sobs were heard in reply, and a boyish voice answered:

"Please, sir, don't beat me to-day. I know I have done very badly, but—"

"A good whipping will teach you to do better another time," Hercules replied, roughly.

Then came a sound of heavy blows and the cries and groans of a child.

"Mercy! master—mercy for to-day."

"You fool! You awkward idiot! You are good for nothing! You are a disgrace to my tent!"

A blow accompanied each opprobrious epithet.

"You hear?" whispered the clown; "it is thus that children who are stolen are treated among us. Be off with you, I say, and as quickly as possible."

Andrée rose hastily, but she felt a strange unwillingness to leave the clown. She wanted to take him with her.

"Won't you come too, Monsieur *Face*—"

"*Face-à-Claques*, if you please, petite. No, I can't go with you. I must remain here."

"But he will beat you, too."

"I dare say, but only in public, that is what he pays me my salary for. You see, petite, I must earn my bread somehow. Now tell me where you live. I will not call on your parents, for I can no longer present

myself in society, for nowadays, I am only Pierrot—only *Face-à-Claques*. I am anything you please except some one!"

As the clown spoke he took the child by the hand and led her from the tent.

It was night. There was still a faint light in the West, but the stars were out above. The clown looked up for a moment, and then stood still and listened.

"He has finished beating the boy. You need not be troubled, he is not fool enough to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Besides, the Master is not really so brutal as he looks."

"I live in *La Rue Croisatière*, quite near the *Ecole Professionelle*," answered Andrée Naviel to the question her friend had asked. "Come and see us."

"I tell you I cannot, petite," answered the clown, sadly, "but when I pass the house I will look at your door—perhaps you may be at your window, but you will not recognize me in my every day dress—but that will not matter, I shall have seen you. Good bye; take the boat that lies close to the bridge."

"*Au revoir*, Monsieur Pierrot," answered Andrée.

"Will you grant me one favor before we part?"

"I will, indeed."

"Will you allow me to kiss you once?"

"I should like it," the child replied.

He bent his tall form and kissed her with such strange passion that tears came to the eyes of the child, she knew not why.

Then he turned and fled like a thief in the night, leaving her alone in the park, where the darkness was scarcely changed by the lights of the booths and tents illuminated for the fête of the evening.

The long covered wagon was just in front of her, and the man stood on the step outside the canvas door still shouting:

"You must not go by without seeing Irma, you must not die until you have seen Irma—the most beautiful woman in the world—the woman who makes all other women jealous, and all the men admire her. Come

in, come in and see the most beautiful woman in the world for two sous!"

Andrée again wished that she was Irma, the beauty of the world.

This fête—a couple of lovers passing her in the twilight—a girl and youth standing in the shadow of the big chestnut tree, all affected her imagination, as did the dancers on the lighted platforms, and the young men mounted on the wooden horses who were singing "*La Fille Angot*" at the top of their voices.

Andrée nevertheless resolutely left the Park. Her parents, she felt must be already aware of her absence, for by this time Madame Lafrançois must have informed them of her absence. She felt that she must now make her way home as fast as possible.

As she passed the *Tête Noire* she heard men's voices coming through the windows of a private room. She recognized that of the Marquis d'Albigny, who spoke very loudly:

"Gentlemen, I drink to the health of Nana—I drink to the Queen of the day!"

The boat lay at the *Quai*, coming from Suresnes and stopped to take in passengers.

Andrée hurried on board and was soon on her way to Paris, the lights of which she presently began to see.

CHAPTER III.

REST AT LAST.

MADAME Lafrançois could not sleep, and in the middle of the night was seized by a nervous trembling from which she could obtain no relief. She noticed also that the forefinger of her left hand was completely numb.

She nevertheless rose at her customary hour in the morning, and entered her school-room as usual. She was standing in front of a map of Europe making some explanations, when Andreé rushed in like a wild creature, and ran toward her teacher to embrace her and beg her pardon.

When she saw the child, Madame Lafrançois stopped short, vainly seeking words in which to continue her explanations:

"Go to your—" she stammered, she could not remember the word she wanted to use. Her lips moved, but no intelligible sound passed them. At the same time her uplifted arm fell at her side. She summoned all her remaining strength and said distinctly:

"Andrée! Andrée! Thank God that you are here!" Then she fell senseless, an inert mass, at the feet of the children seated on the front bench. They all ran away from the room in their terror, and Andrée was left there alone. She endeavored to raise the dying woman, but as this was impossible, she crouched on the floor and raised the lady's head on her knees.

The child's heart was nearly broken. She instantly knew that she was the cause of this sudden illness, this great calamity to her beloved teacher, and felt that she had killed her. Once more she endeavored to raise her, but as before, all her efforts were useless. A faint smile passed over the lips of the teacher as she murmured:

"It is all over—let me die in peace—"

Suddenly her head fell back and one of her hands caught at the child's dress.

The child was sick with terror, but she felt that she was responsible for this death, and must wait until some one came to her assistance, and could not desert her post. She sat thus for an hour, the body, it seemed to her, growing gradually heavier: she moreover felt the chill through her skirts.

She asked herself how long she must stay there, would her companions never return? Would they send no one?

She began to be afraid; her teeth chattered. She could bear this no longer.

Through the open window came the merry twitter of the sparrows, fluttering from branch to branch of the old poplar tree. Among these birds were probably those which Madame had liberated only the day before. The sun boldly streamed into the empty class-room, and in the centre of the yellow rectangle on the wall opposite the window, was the shadow of the poplar pierced with holes like a black robe, and shivering like a cold and wretched beggar.

Finally, Madame Naviel came to deliver Andrée She brought with her a physician.

"Mother," faltered Andrée, who was trembling from head to foot, and whose voice shook, "I tried to lift her, but I could not, and I stayed here with her."

"She has been dead an hour," said the physician, "and this child of course could not lift the body; it is unfortunate, however, that this young girl should have been subjected to a scene of this nature, suffered to undergo such a terrible shock. See, her lips are purple. How old are you, Mademoiselle?"

He was very grave as he asked this question.

"She is almost eleven, sir," answered the mother.

"She is large of her age, take my advice and keep her very quiet. Avoid all excitement. I will leave you now, medical science can do nothing here. Lay the body on her bed and do what is necessary. You

are a member of the family, I believe. I bid you good morning, Madame."

At this moment the old servant returning from Market entered the room.

"Good Heavens!" she cried. "Can it be possible! Poor Madame. Alas! what shall we do?"

"Will you help me carry her to her room?" asked Madame Naviel.

"Yes, Madame, I will, although I do not like to touch the dead. I have always heard that it was unhealthy, but never mind, I will help you."

The two women took up the body and carried it to the sleeping room lately occupied by Madame Lafrançois.

"I fancy she had a turn yesterday at St. Cloud," said the servant, "for when she came home she was no longer the same woman."

"Yes, Andrée gave us great anxiety," answered Madame Naviel.

"And you, Madame, are younger and stronger than my poor mistress; you see this poor lady has lived all her life shut up in her school-room, and she was all used up. It is a hard life that, though people do not think so. Then too, it tires the lungs to talk all day."

"Poor Madame Lafrançois! Any one would think her asleep as she lies there on her bed all dressed. It gave her a shock, to think that she had lost the little girl. She adored children, you see. But after all it does not matter I suppose, she had to die sometime, and it was just as well to go this way as any other."

The Nuns who were to watch over the dead now slowly mounted the stairs, preceded by the clash of their rosaries which sounded like that made by dry bones.

There were two of these Sisters, two women of the people, who had entered Religion through ignorance and simplicity of heart. They were kindly creatures, ready to perform every service for the family of the dead, as well as for the dead, and familiarized by habit to the melancholy tasks assigned to them.

They lighted two candles and placed them on the table by the side of the bed, then they knelt down and made the sign of the cross while their lips moved in a low, devout prayer.

Then they rose and undressed the body, after having closed the eyes.

"Go home, Andrée," said her mother, "I must stop at the Mairie."

"You need not do that, Madame Naviel, I will go myself," said the servant, who, on seeing the Nuns, had suddenly become very helpful. "I wish though, that you would give notice at the church, and see the Curé, then too the man must come to take the measure of the coffin. Death comes to us all, old and young, rich and poor, we all end by being put into a coffin and sent away in a hearse."

The good woman began to feel quite lively and gay by this time.

Madame Naviel gave a new sheet to the Nuns, as the keys still hung in the wardrobe where Madame Lafrançois kept her linen.

Andrée went home as her mother had bidden her. Several of the mothers of the pupils now entered the room. They had left their little girls below in the court-yard, from whence came an occasional laugh.

"I think the next thing that should be done is to notify the family," said Madame Naviel.

"Oh! no, there is no need of that," objected the old servant. "My mistress had only one sister, she is insane and at Bicêtre."

"Then we will do the best we can. At all events, I will stop at the church."

The little girls in the court-yard were one by one taken away by their parents, and profound silence reigned throughout the building.

The dead woman lay on her bed, with a Nun on either side, who, worn out by their mortuary duties, were half asleep, and murmured Latin words without half understanding them. Three hours later, a man came with a foot rule in his hand to measure the body.

He wrote down his figures in a memorandum book of green leather, talking all the time as he did so.

"The principal thing," said one Sister, "is to die well."

"The principal thing in my opinion," he answered, "is to live well, so well that your friends are glad to give you an oak coffin when you die, rather than a pine one. Good night, Sister." And the man departed.

But on the sill of the door he turned—

"I suppose," he said, "they pay you handsomely, for it is not pleasant work to remain in this bad air all night."

"It is not for money that we come," replied the Sister, "they give us what they choose."

"Is that so? Well! then nobody can find any fault, I suppose. Good night, Sister."

And he ran down the stairs whistling gaily as he went.

Madame Naviel came back about four o'clock. All had been arranged, but not without trouble. When the Curé was informed that the funeral was that of a Directress of the Ecole Professionnelle, and that an interment of the sixth class was all that was desired, he was vexed, and said those persons who died without confession were not entitled to the prayers of the Church. The funeral was fixed for the next afternoon, which would give time for invitations to be sent out. Besides, in cases of sudden death, too great haste was not advisable.

The servant came back from the Mairie where she had been kept waiting for three hours, and was consequently in very bad humor.

"I never knew anything like it," she grumbled, "when I got there, there was only the one clerk in the bureau, the others were at the café, and at least a dozen persons were waiting! And you need not expect me to make the declarations at the Mairie, for my head is all in confusion. The fact is, one can't be born, nor be married, nor die, without these wretched papers. One can't even go to another and a better

world without them, it seems." Then Madame Naviel returned to her home to see to her husband's dinner, for it was time for him to return from the foundry.

The day was drawing to an end. A mist rising from the Seine came floating in at the open window. The atmosphere was heavy, and in the twilight the form of the dead body covered with a sheet, lay white and still. By degrees the chattering of the birds in the poplar tree died away as had the voices of the children, and all was still except the distant roar of the City, like the murmur of the sea, and the rattle of an occasional carriage nearer by. Occasionally a bugle call at the barracks of Romilly, rang out in the silence.

About eleven o'clock, the old servant entered the room. The two Nuns were kneeling and as erect as usual, but their lips had ceased to move; they were, in fact, asleep and unconscious of all that was going on about them.

The woman went up to the bed to look at her dear mistress. The candles had burned nearly down, and an oblique light struck the pale face. A light breeze from the window caused the flame to waver — the shadow of the dead woman's profile lay on the wall.

"Good Heavens!" cried the servant, seized with sudden terror, "look, look!"

"What is it?" asked the Sisters, awakening with a start.

"Madame certainly moved!" gasped the woman.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WREATH OF ORANGE BLOSSOMS.

IT was only the flickering flame of the candles which had occasioned this illusion. The old servant realized this, and stooped to press a kiss upon the brow of the dead.

This kiss chilled her lips, and as a precaution she heated a needle in the candle, and crossed her lips with it. She then went to the arm chair of her late mistress, and established herself there comfortably, sleeping until dawn.

The interment took place the next day at Père La Chaise. The families of the pupils were each represented by two or three persons.

The father and mother of Andrée were both there, while the child herself was one of the four who walked at the side of the bier, holding the cords.

Andrée sobbed bitterly.

The old servant wept softly, but was comforted by feeling that she was the gainer by this death. Madame had left her in her will all her furniture and ten thousand francs. The rest of Madame's savings she had devoted to the benefit of her insane sister at Bicêtre.

When the coffin had been placed in the grave, each person present came to throw in a handful of consecrated earth. After this was done the crowd dispersed, talking among themselves.

They hurried away, for they had little time to give to the dead. Life recalled them to its duties, its pleasures, and its responsibilities. There were two or three women, however, who on that occasion remembered their friends and affections buried in this Cemetery, and now turned to look for these long forgotten tombs.

Winter rains and summer heats had already effaced

the names on the crosses, as Time had effaced the sorrows of those early days of mourning, in the hearts of survivors. One cannot be always thinking of the dead. The soul cannot always be clothed in black, life is not made for perpetual grief.

On Andrée, however, the sudden death of her beloved teacher made a profound impression. She could never make up her mind to return to that school room, and always felt a certain remorse, as if she had committed a crime, and as if she owed to the dear memory of her friend every reparation. She imposed a penance upon herself — that of constant work.

She begged her mother to allow her to go with her to Monsieur Paillardin's flower shop, and as she at once evinced considerable skill, she soon earned a good salary. But this incessant occupation of her time, to the exclusion of all the pleasures befitting her age, affected her health, and threw her into a vein of mysticism which made her mother very anxious.

She became pious, haunted the different churches, and, on Sundays and at vespers, felt the most ecstatic joy in listening to the great organ and to the chanting of the psalms, and to the clear ringing voices of the sopranos rising high above the full rich bass. She breathed with passionate delight the perfume of the incense, as it rose in clouds to the arched ceilings, and enveloped in faint blue spirals the large crucifix on the centre altar.

She thought of death without terror, and felt sure that all would not end in a hole in the ground. She liked to exaggerate the importance of the human "I" and to figure to herself a world of light, of harmony, and of love, where, in the serenity of a joy without end, she would join those whom she had loved on this earth.

There she would meet her dear Madame Lafrançois who had forgiven her, and also that poor *Face-à-Claques* —who would be abused no more by that brutal Hercules!

About this time, she began to feel an ever increasing disgust for life, an immense weariness, and a wish to fly

away and be at rest. She sat for hours in the *atelier* without uttering a word to her companions, who were all older than herself. She lived a life apart from the others in an imaginary world, absorbed in a vague spiritualism, and in religious meditation, at which the others laughed.

Thus it came to pass that Andrée had not one single friend in the work-room, and as she disdained to make any confidences, she received none. The proprietor, Monsieur Paillardin, himself, however, held her in high esteem. Her work was more delicate, her taste and dexterity of a higher order than the other work-women. She had an innate perception of the beauties of Art and of Nature.

In two years, she was at the head of the corps. She was then nearly thirteen. She had grown very much, but was still very thin and delicate looking. In her beautiful almond shaped eyes, whose silky lashes shaded their blue depths, there were swift flashes which seemed to indicate a smouldering fire. Her hair was of a rich gold with a russet tinge, and had grown to an extraordinary length without losing anything of its lustre or silkiness. It fell to her knees, and an artist would have delighted in the tawny splendor of its waves.

She was very proud of this feminine beauty. She had no other gold than this, and when she died she wished her hair to be cut off for her mother.

Notwithstanding her dreary thoughts, she gradually developed into a richness of form, a maturity of beauty that was very striking.

At fourteen, Mademoiselle Naviel abandoned the churches. All her mystical fancies fled like yellow leaves under the first wind of autumn. She suddenly became coquettish, gay, and laughing, and frankly solicitous of admiration, although at the same time perfectly dignified and well behaved.

She had already many admirers, respectable clerks, and business men who came to the house of Paillardin and Co., which was one of the most important flower manufactories in the *Faubourg Saint Martin*.

Her success awakened the jealousy of her companions, who were furious at seeing themselves less admired than "Mademoiselle Andrée," for at this period she ceased to be called Andrée alone, and even the proprietor addressed her as Mademoiselle.

Monsieur Paillardin was a confirmed old bachelor, and at fifty looked only thirty. A few white hairs glittered among his whiskers, his hair was brushed forward in tufts over each ear and was quite gray. His teeth spoiled by the abuse of tobacco, were yellow and stained.

His hands were short and thick, but their shape indicated strength. He gnawed his nails and wore several rings.

His feet were huge, and his stomach protuberant. He sat with his knees a good way apart, in order that he might spread out his hands better, and show his rings to greater advantage.

His face was veined with purple, his nose was short and broad. His under lip was full and indicated that he was fond of the pleasures of the table. He was generous toward women and capable of giving much where they gave all. He rejoiced in the reputation of liberality and of wealth, which was apparent in the heaviness of his watch-chain and in the jewels he wore.

The first time he noticed with especial attention Andrée's beauty was on a certain Friday. A beautiful wreath of orange blossoms had just been finished, and was to be worn by a bride that evening. The flowers were the most natural that had ever been seen. Monsieur Paillardin had entrusted it to Andrée to mount, having the most absolute confidence in her taste and in her ability to dispose the flowers among the thick glossy leaves in the most judicious manner.

All the other work-women were very jealous at the preference given to Andrée, and as they sat around the table uttered several somewhat equivocal jokes which were unnoticed by Mademoiselle Naviel and her mother.

There was one brunette with quick dark eyes and

full lips, whose relations with the proprietor were more than suspected, and who was regarded by her companions with much interest. She was named Margot, and her chirping voice, and abrupt movements all seemed to justify the name, for she had a little of the magpie in her nature, and was never so happy as when in mischief.

"Do you not think, young ladies," she said, abruptly, "that the selection made by the Proprietor, of the person who was to mount the wreath has been a most happy one?"

This question was startling, for her companions all knew that she was quite capable of denouncing to Monsieur Paillardin whomsoever among them should venture to criticise his acts. Consequently, no one spoke.

Madame Naviel was the only one who did not understand, and she therefore said, quietly:

"What do you mean, Margot?"

"My meaning is very simple," answered the magpie, "for there is only one person here, who can aspire to orange blossoms. Is not that so, ladies?"

But this remark was not an agreeable one, and several of the girls replied, indignantly:

"For what do you take us, Margot?" asked the boldest.

"You surely are not such hypocrites as to pretend such stuff to me!" answered Margot. "I am willing to wager most anything, that with the exception of Andrée there is not one among us who—"

"Oh! Margot," interrupted Madame Naviel, "you ought not to say such things. You ought not to say boldly that you—"

"I have said nothing about myself. I merely remarked, that there was among us only one strictly good person, but did not say that this person was not myself."

"Then, you believe that Andrée—"

"Pshaw! Andrée is only a child yet. Wait until her wings grow, and then you will see how well she

will use them. At present, however, I am willing to say that I believe in her, and, therefore, I should like to see her try on the wreath."

Madame Naviel, somewhat wounded, rose, and said:

"I have no objection. Put on the wreath, Andrée, but first let down your hair."

Andrée, with one quick movement of her hand, loosened her magnificent tresses, then lightly placed the white wreath on her golden hair.

It was a glorious day in June; the sun gleamed into the workroom through three large uncurtained windows; Andrée stood in all this blaze of sunshine, and, raising both arms, tried to gather up her wealth of hair.

At this moment, Monsieur Paillardin entered. He stood transfixed with admiration.

"How old is your daughter?" he asked of Madame Naviel.

"Fourteen, sir," answered the mother.

"Ah! she looks older. You must look out for her among all these women! I assure you, she is safer with a man like myself, than with Margot, for example. I congratulate you, Mademoiselle Andrée. The wreath is a great success, and you deserve a reward: if your mother will consent, I will take you to the theatre to-night, and before the theatre I invite you to dinner. It is now four o'clock. You have only time to go home and make your toilette, and return here by six. I have a loge for the Bouffes. After the play, I will take you home in my carriage."

Madame Naviel, indirectly addressed by her employer, hesitated slightly. Monsieur Paillardin saw this, and said, good naturedly:

"Come now, my good woman, have you no confidence in me?"

Margot was in a rage.

Madame Naviel, only half reassured, dared not refuse, lest she should offend Monsieur Paillardin.

Andrée, in great delight, hurried off to don her Sunday clothes.

CHAPTER V.

ANDRÉE DINES WITH HER EMPLOYER.

ANDRÉE NAVIEL returned at six to the establishment of Paillardin and Co.

The valet received her with great politeness, and showed her into the salon.

"Monsieur begs that Mademoiselle will wait a few minutes."

Andrée seated herself in a low lounging chair covered with green velvet, and trimmed with bands of poppy-colored satin embroidered with yellow and black pansies. All the furniture was like this, even the divan in the centre of the salon. In the corners stood artificial Calladiums, grouped with wonderful fidelity to Nature.

On each side of the green marble mantel, hung gilt baskets containing beautiful leaves and falling branches.

Andrée noticed also the two candelabra, with their lights surmounted by a Cupid who, with bandaged eyes, was fitting a golden arrow to his bow. Other Cupids were painted on the ceiling. The portières and the curtains were of green velvet, like the furniture, and lined with plum-colored satin. Four mirrors, Louis Quinze in style, reflected every side of the room.

Copies of Boucher, Watteau and Lancret were on the panels, and while Andrée was admiring them Monsieur Paillardin came in.

"Are you hungry, my child?" he said, affecting a fatherly tone.

"I must confess, sir," answered Andrée, "that when I am going to the theatre, I am so happy that I never care to eat."

"You never ought to feel that way; on the contrary, the happier you are, the more you need food. And

now, my dear, take my arm, and allow me to conduct you to the dining-room."

Without any affected humility, but with perfect ease of manner, Andrée took the arm which her employer offered.

She was very charming in her well made costume of lilac faille, with her high buttoned gloves of the same tint, and a coquettish straw hat trimmed with lilies of the valley.

The silver soup tureen, from which rose a cloud of steam, stood on a table glittering with glass and silver.

The valet served the soup.

"Have you been at the Bouffes?" asked the host.

"Never, sir."

"Then you have never seen Judic in *la Timballe?*"

"No, sir, not yet."

"She is simply ravishing."

"So I am told."

"She does not say much, it is simply her manner of saying it."

"*Truite au beurre d'Isegny?*" asked the lackey in his black coat and white cravat.

"Take some, Mademoiselle, you will find it excellent, I fancy. You see I am a great eater. An old bachelor like myself, who has no little wife to pet, must be forgiven if he thinks too much of the pleasures of the table."

"Saint-Emilion?" asked the servant.

"If, however, Mademoiselle Andrée would do me the honor to take a seat very often at my table, and to go with me to the theatre, I should be less alone, and my life would become very different."

"But what is to prevent your marrying?" asked Andrée quickly.

"Would you have me marry, at my age? Would you have me marry an old woman? Thank you, no—I do not like them; and as to young girls, where should I find one who would accept an old fellow like myself? Now would you, Mademoiselle Andrée, take me for a husband?"

"Yes, if I loved you."

"That is a most Jesuitical reply—'If I loved you,' you said? Yes, of course, but that is the precise question. Do you think you could love me well enough to marry me?"

"I do not know you well enough to answer that question."

"*Escalope de veau aux tomates farcies*," said the servant.

"Tell Jean to be punctual," said his master, "for the other night he made me lose the first act of *la Timballe*. As Mademoiselle Naviel does me the honor to accompany me to-night, I am anxious that she should hear the whole of the play."

The servant went out with his master's orders.

"Come now, Andrée, tell me frankly," resumed Monsieur Paillardin, "if you were rich would the age of a suitor be an invincible objection with you?"

"I should always prefer a suitor who was not more than thirty," answered the girl seriously, "but there are many old men whom I prefer to young ones; but I cannot tell yet whether I am likely to love or not."

"Yes, Andrée, you will love. I see a wavering flame in your pretty eyes that tells the story. You may be certain that an old fox like myself is not likely to be deceived."

"Well, then, Monsieur Paillardin, let me tell you that I am determined not to love a man unless I am sure of being his first love."

"You make a great mistake then," answered Monsieur Paillardin. "Let me advise you to follow the paternal advice which I now give you—I might be your father, my dear; I am old enough, and, besides, the relative positions give me the right to remonstrate a little. You are very pretty, and when you are a little older you will be adorable and adored, but you must distrust your youthful admirers. Some of them will offer marriage without in the least knowing if they can provide you with a daily loaf of bread. And then what next? They will fly away like birds from the

matrimonial cage when the doors are open, and you will be left alone. I beg your pardon; pray take a bit of that duck, you will find it excellent. Jules, serve the champagne."

Jules filled Andrée's glass and that of his master.

"I drink to your happiness," said Monsieur Paillardin, as he raised his glass.

"And I to yours, sir," answered Andrée.

"*Morilles á la crême?*" said the lackey.

"Thanks, nothing more. I am not accustomed—"

"Deuce take the theatre!" cried Paillardin, "if it is that which has taken away your appetite. What have we still, Jules?"

"*Sorbet, au moka*, sir."

"Serve it quickly, then."

The dinner concluded somewhat abruptly, for it was time to depart.

Andrée was in an ecstacy of enjoyment, for this was the first time she had ever been in a private carriage or had occupied a loge at the theatre. And this exquisite dinner, the elegance of the table, the silver and the crystal, the antique lamp of copper, suspended by chains from the ceiling of varnished oak, the majestic lackey, all this opulence and comfort struck the secret chords in her heart.

She felt that the aspect of this wealthy home had aroused new ambitions and aspirations within herself, and she knew that when the curtain fell after the play it would be also on all this luxury in which she had felt so entirely at home.

The carriage was announced. Monsieur put on a pair of new gloves, which he had carefully selected to match Andrée's.

While the coupé bore them to the Bouffes, he called Andrée's attention to this fact, adding: "I wore them in order that people might think you were my little wife—"

In a matter of course way he put his arm around her waist and, drawing her toward him, kissed her on her brow.

Andrée was very innocent and very ignorant, and did not realize her danger. She drew back, however. In reality she was glad to have pleased a man so rich as he, one who had a carriage and liveried servants. But she knew from Madame Naviel that a woman who wishes to be respected must put an end to any such impertinences. Without any affectation of terror, she simply drew back into her corner, and laughed a little.

"You know very well," she said, "that I cannot be your wife. I am too young and too poor for you."

"I see, Andrée, my gray hair strikes terror to your soul, in spite of your words. Cannot you understand, child, that a man of my age loves better than a younger man? Do you not know that the young love themselves more than any one else? If you were to share my life, not now, but later—in two or three years, say—I would insure a tranquil existence to your parents and to you the life of a Queen: all Paris should talk of your carriages and your toilettes. You should always be seen at the best theatres in the best loge. We would travel like two lovers, and I would love you as no one else ever will in this world!"

"You are describing an impossible dream, Monsieur," said Andrée.

The coupé suddenly stopped and the groom opened the door.

Paillardin was the first to emerge, and offered his hand to the young girl.

At this same moment, a landau with blue liveries drove up.

A woman who was a perfect blonde, and all glittering with gold and precious stones, stepped from the carriage on the asphalt pavement, where she took the arm of a man who was well dressed and decorated.

She saw Andrée in the vestibule in the full blaze of the gas, and exclaimed aloud:

"Look at that girl, d'Albigny. Don't you think she is as much like me as if she were my daughter?"

"Upon my word, she is," answered d'Albigny, "but at this rate you might be a grandmother."

CHAPTER VI.

JUDIC PLAYS.

ANDRÉE suddenly looked up. Where had she seen that blonde?

Paillardin leaned toward her, and whispered in her ear: "That is Nana."

"Ah! I remember," said the girl, with a shiver.

Paillardin had taken a loge that held four. The orchestra was playing, and Nana occupied a proscenium box with the Marquis.

When she entered, a buzz of admiration filled the house. Her reign had lasted fifteen years. And Time had not yet marred this *chef d'œuvre* of the Devil. Brilliant, insolent and fatal, she seemed to daily grow in harm. She had ruined the old King, but received him occasionally, as she found his piteous air of fallen majesty very amusing. She made him her buffoon.

As to d'Albigny, she liked him after her own fashion. Having ruined him, she now supported him. Nana gave entertainments, at which the men played high, but the hostess and the Marquis invariably won. He had formerly been successful at the Bourse, and he now speculated with Nana's money. Their hôtel became fabulously luxurious.

Messieurs, Generals and Ambassadors, all paid tribute to her, and were to be seen at her fêtes. She had acquired three languages, and learned music. She sang like Krauss, and was in a position to sell the secrets of France to any other nation.

At this time French society was tainted with an hereditary virus. Everything was venal, men, women, and consciences. Nana gave the tone to all.

Other women imitated her toilettes, without being able to attain the height of her luxury. China, India and Japan laid their treasures at her feet.

One day a certain Rajah left in her salon a heap of sparkling diamonds. She sent them back to him.

He returned and offered her all his jewels, that is to say his entire fortune, his aigrette of rubies, his golden bracelets set thick with emeralds, his rings, and a box of Indian wood filled with unset black pearls. He offered her everything he had in the world, even his sabre, with its handle encrusted with sapphires.

She laughed and accepted, and a week later closed her door in his face, sent the gold of the bracelets to be melted up, and the diamonds to be set at Fontane's.

At the Bouffes, on the night of which we write, the whole house had eyes only for her, watching her every gesture, and were ready to applaud her as if she had been a very Queen. She acknowledged with a haughty smile the salutations of the young men in the orchestra stalls, remembering them only because they had lost everything, reputation and money, under her roof.

Respectable women tried to imitate this smile, practising it by stealth before the mirror at the back of their boxes.

Andrée remembered her only too well. She had seen her that day at Saint-Cloud, the day of her escapade which had ended so disastrously for Madame Lafrançois. She recognized the Marquis also, the amateur wrestler who had won nine hundred and ninety-five Louis in the wager exposed by *Face-à-Claques*. She thought with singular tenderness of that poor *Face-à-Claques*, of his piteous face and lamentable thinness. She had hoped to see him again—hoped that some morning when she went out, she should meet him, that he would pass under her window as he had promised. Perhaps he was dead. Her heart sank at this thought.

Monsieur Paillardin in his admiration for Nana, momentarily forgot Andrée, whose simple, girlish beauty had attracted no attention. She did not resent this neglect or even notice it, so deeply was she absorbed in the recollections awakened by Nana's sudden appearance.

Presently the curtain rose.

All Paris had come to see Judic and to hear Pischard in *la Timballe*. The play contained a serenade which Pischard sang divinely.

As to Judic, she recited her couplets with the air of a little boarding school girl, who knew more than she seemed to wish to have supposed. Her very reticence was so suggestive that the public adored her, for they were weary of the open vulgarity of the stage under the Empire. The refinement of our Parisian civilization does not permit too evident coarseness of words. Andrée was greatly interested in the play, and yet she could not forget Nana, who was determined to give Judic a positive ovation that night. She loudly applauded, using the Italian "*brava! bravissima!* Judic!"

Nana conducted herself like a beneficent princess, sure of her own strength. During the *entr' acte* her loge was filled with men of the world, quiet and grave, who almost without exception left the loge of some woman of fashion to enter hers.

The appearance of Stog, Postmaster General, and of the Prince Mulhausen, two new adorers of Nana, created quite a sensation. They were a little reserved in their manner toward d'Albigny, at the same time they yielded to him as to the husband of the Queen.

Nana sat looking at Andrée with fixed attention.

"What interests you so much?" asked the Marquis.

"I am looking at that child down there, sitting with that stout man. She is the same girl we saw as we came in. Her resemblance to myself is really startling."

Nana's little circle followed the direction of her eyes.

"Upon my word, you are right," said d'Albigny, and every lorgnette in Nana's box was riveted on that of Paillardin. Immediately this example was followed by the whole house.

Andrée, annoyed, retired to the back of the loge, in order to be less conspicuous. Presently there was a discreet tap at the door which Paillardin immediately opened.

The box-opener appeared with an enormous bouquet of white roses.

"I was told to bring these flowers to Madame," she said.

Andrée blushed.

"Take it, my child," said Paillardin, "it binds you to nothing; it is a mere homage to your beauty. Then, too, am I not here to protect you?" And he held his head more erect.

She accepted the bouquet, and holding it to her face, moved a little more forward in her loge. Her golden hair glistened in the shower of light from the chandelier — her beautiful eyes were illuminated, and when she raised her head she was literally transfigured by the pleasure she felt in the silent homage brought to her by these half-opened roses, fitting symbol of her youth.

Then in her loge Nana generously applauded her, and repeated the remark in a loud tone which she had made when she entered the house:

"It is astonishing! She might be taken for my daughter!"

These words were heard — they were repeated from mouth to mouth, from the orchestra stalls to the upper gallery.

"Nana's daughter!" said the rich people in the boxes.

"Nana's daughter!" repeated the echo among the *friezes* above.

All the women leaned forward to look at the girl, and to institute comparisons, which they did in audible voices.

Paillardin felt almost jealous of all this admiration, while at the same time he was highly flattered. He leaned over his chair and assumed an air of intense intimacy. The *double entendres* of the play amused him greatly. The child laughed without knowing why, for she did not in the least comprehend the allusions, which, however, made her very uncomfortable.

By degrees she felt herself enervated by this atmosphere of admiration. She began to think everything

was perfect, even to Monsieur Paillardin, who seemed to her absolutely transfigured. She no longer thought him ugly nor old, notwithstanding his apoplectic face. He had enough influence over her to induce her to accept the flowers, and he was now saying things to her that she ought not to hear.

Suddenly there came a loud rap at the door of the loge.

"Who is there?" asked Paillardin impatiently.

"I, Pierre Naviel," said a full voice.

"My father!" exclaimed Andrée, coloring as if she had been doing something wrong. She hastily rose and opened the door.

A workman, with an energetic face and colossal form, with eyes that looked straight into yours with a frank, honest smile, appeared in the doorway. He wore his Sunday coat in honor of his daughter.

"I have come for you, my child," he said to Andrée.

At this moment the curtain rose for the third act. Andrée wanted to stay.

"No," said Pierre Naviel gently but firmly, "this is no place for you — and your mother was wrong—"

Here Paillardin attempted to interfere.

"Excuse me, Master," said the man. "In your establishment my daughter owes you obedience, but elsewhere it is her father who commands."

Andrée rose and followed Pierre Naviel, carrying with her the bouquet of white roses — mute witnesses of her ephemeral triumph.

Her heart was filled with regret as she crossed the street close by the coupé that was waiting for her.

She thought of this first success won by her beauty, but suddenly a thought came to her which marred her joy.

What was that name she had heard? What did the crowd call her? Not Andrée Naviel — but Nana's Daughter!

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUICIDE.

ANDRÉE lifted the roses from her dressing table and cut the ribbon that bound them, in order to put the flowers in water. A card fell from the centre of the roses.

On this card was the name Lucien Despretz, and in pencil below: "A tribute to virtue and beauty."

Whence came this counsel enveloped in a compliment. It was to Andrée Naviel, and not to Nana's Daughter, that the unknown admirer sent this offering. She placed the card among her most secret treasures, and scattered the faded rose leaves among her laces.

Who could this Lucien Despretz be? She knew no one of the name. She had long dreamed of a lover who should be as young and handsome as a hero of romance, and at once created an imaginary Lucien Despretz.

She depicted him according to her fancy, sometimes clothing him in uniform, when he was tall and haughty, wearing a fierce moustache. At other times, according to her own mood, his handsome head was bowed under the weight of active thought, his broad brow was shaded by luxuriant masses of hair, and the light beard was cut into a point. But by degrees, under the influence of an industrious life and the honest simplicity of her home, these dreams were dissipated and almost forgotten. She became stronger, and lost much of her frail delicacy of appearance.

Sometimes she met on the stairway a young man who looked as if he might be about twenty-five, whose beard was light and carefully trimmed, who was always well dressed, whose eyes were frank and honest, and whose smile was kindly, though often sad.

She had paid no especial attention to this young

man, only noticing that his bow was very polite, and that he stepped aside as soon as he saw her, to allow her to pass.

She knew, however, that he lived with his mother on the same floor as herself. His mother, whom she also frequently met, was always in black, but she had never heard their names.

One evening returning from her work, she noticed a visiting card fastened to the door of her opposite neighbor. The concierge had just lighted the gas. Andrée naturally stopped and read the name. She found to her great astonishment that this was her unknown admirer — the admirer who had sent her the roses at the Bouffes. And now the hero of her dreams had appeared in the flesh!

From this day she always colored when she met Lucien Despretz on the stairs, but her discovery made no other change in her life. Never had the young man spoken to her. Once only he ventured on a smile as he bowed low before her.

Once Andrée fancied that he turned pale as she passed, but as she had not returned his smile, his salutations were grave and more polite than ever.

Pierre Naviel allowed his daughter all reasonable pleasures, and had even learned to love the theatre for Andrée's sake. He took her in the winter to the Française and to the Opéra Comique. In the summer, they, with Madame Naviel, wandered off frequently into the country, coming home at night fatigued in body but rested in mind, having enjoyed their long day and the repose of the dusky twilight.

One Sunday at the end of October they started forth to spend at Bellevue a last day in the woods. Sunshine, after days of rain, warmed the yellow forests. The swallows had gone, but a few birds still lingered singing their autumnal songs. At Bellevue they bought ham and bread, pears and wine, which they ate out of doors. Nothing is more delightful than a day like this, and a lunch among the falling leaves in the last days of autumn.

They went to the boat early, as Madame Naviel was afraid of the night dew on account of Andrée, who had had a little cough for several weeks.

It was about seven o'clock when they landed at the Pont d'Austerlitz; a thick fog was rising from the Seine, and lay over all the buildings on the shore. The square masonry of Notre Dame was wrapped in the mist; only its towers rose above it. The gas-lamps on the Quai struggled ineffectually with the darkness; *sergeants de ville* stood on the bridges holding torches. About the middle of the bridge the Naviel family met a tall, slender man, who was running. Suddenly they heard him stop, and then they distinguished the dull thud of a body falling into the water.

Pierre Naviel said to his wife:

"Wait for me here," and hurried toward the spot where the man had disappeared. And he, too, presently disappeared in the fog.

Torches were borne along the bridge. A crowd gathered, and voices were heard.

"It was just here," some one shouted.

"Throw over the buoy at the end of the pontoon," called another voice.

"Torches here! Hurry! In the name of Heaven, hurry!"

"Why does not some one who can swim, jump in to the rescue!" cried some one else.

"They are drowned by this time!"

"No! I tell you I see something over there!"

The confusion and excitement increased.

No one else dared to jump into the water on account of the density of the fog, and Naviel, who had tried to save the drowning man, was apparently left to his fate.

"They are done for," remarked a man, as he passed Andrée and her mother. "They won't be seen by their friends again unless they go to look for them at the Morgue!"

"Cowards!" exclaimed Andrée, amid passionate

sobs. "Will none among you save my father? I will do it, if you won't!"

Madame Naviel uttered a cry and endeavored to detain the girl, who broke away and ran down the steps which led to the pontoon, full of that courage imparted only by love. Suddenly she heard her father's voice from above.

"Andrée, Andrée! stop, my child! I am here, and we are both safe."

The young girl fell fainting on the edge of the Quai. Pierre Naviel was at her side in three bounds, and Madame Naviel followed more slowly. He lifted Andrée in his arms; the girl slowly opened her eyes.

"My child!" he exclaimed, "where were you going?"

"I wanted—to help—you," faltered Andrée.

By this time, Madame Naviel was close at hand. The girl's strength quickly returned.

"I am all right now," she said. "I can walk, let us go home."

She took her father's arm.

"Where is the poor fellow?" she asked.

"On a bench above. They are bringing him to. Just imagine, he did not wish to be saved! He said to me, 'Let me alone — let me drown. I have no bread to eat — how can I live?' It was no easy matter to hold him up, though, for he was so tall and so thin that he went down like lead. When I saw him pass us, I took him for our neighbor."

"Please go and see how he is," pleaded Andrée. "I do not need you any longer."

She dropped her father's arm, that he might see how strong she was.

"We will all go," answered Naviel, "for I must confess to feeling a great interest in the poor fellow."

When they reached the bench where Pierre Naviel had placed the suicide, they found the unhappy man sitting up, pale and shivering, surrounded by a curious crowd.

"Gentlemen — charity for this famished man!" said Andrée, in her sweet voice, and taking her father's hat she penetrated the crowd.

When she went toward the man, he looked at her with wide-open eyes, seeing her very distinctly by the light of the gas lamp close to the bench.

"What! is that really you? Excuse me, Mademoiselle," he stammered, "but you have grown very much since the fête at Saint Cloud."

Andrèe looked at him with a puzzled expression.

"You do not remember *Face-à-Claques*, then? You are too old now, Mademoiselle; you would not kiss poor Pierrot to-day?"

"It is really you, then?" said Andrée. "Father," she continued, "this is the good man of whom I told you. But for him, I should probably be dancing on the tight rope at present."

Her innate goodness of heart made itself felt in these words. Nevertheless, this man bore little resemblance to her old Pierrot, who had been so droll in his clown's dress. The poor fellow looked miserable beyond words. His long, thin hair hung over his shoulders like rags; his beard was untrimmed and of a yellowish gray; his whole aspect in short was one of squalid poverty.

Pierre Naviel took a carriage and placed Pierrot in it, to whom Andrée gave the money she had collected. Twenty minutes later, the Naviels reached their home, having with them this poor *Face-à-Claques*, who was shivering with cold and hunger.

Andrée went to find some dry clothing for him, and Pierre Naviel took him to his own bed-room, where he made him dress. Madame Naviel, in the meantime, lighted a fire and laid the table.

After he had eaten something, the ex-Pierrot related his piteous history. It was the old one of a gradual fall into evil, led on by extravagant tastes and unworthy associates. He spoke of his child, whose mother, he said, was a conspicuous member of a certain circle.

"She would be about your age, Mademoiselle," he said to Andrée, "and I am sure, would have been very pretty. Had she been left to me, I would have worked for her, and known, I am sure, no discouragement."

"Yes, comrade, a man must work," said Pierre Naviel. "Without work, he is only half a man. If you wish, I think I can find you a position with Monsieur Paillardin; he can easily find you work of some kind. You are not in the least fitted for the foundry, or I would get you in there."

"Thank you, sir. I can read and write, and in my time have known something of figures, and have held more than one honorable position. I lost everything, and have no one to blame but myself. I was crazy over this girl, for whose jewels and carriages all Paris paid. And finally I committed a theft — a theft, do you hear? But I intended to return the money, and should have done so, had not that wretched woman caused my arrest first. Was I not right, when I tried to drown myself? Yesterday I met Hercules — you remember him, Mademoiselle—he advanced me twenty sous and bade me go and be shaved, and then take my old position with him. I took his twenty sous, but I was not shaved, and I dare not go to him without having obeyed him."

"But what did you do with the money?" asked Naviel.

"I drank it, sir, in order to gain courage to drown myself. Now I will leave you."

The Naviels did not attempt to detain him. Andrée went out with him into the corridor; but hardly had he crossed the threshold, than he stood with dilated eyes fixed on the visiting card nailed upon the opposite door. Then without a word, he dashed down the street and fled as if pursued by a spectre.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DAY IN THE COUNTRY.

WHEN the winter was over and the buds swelled on the trees, then the gayeties commenced for "the *rosières*," as the girls who made the flowers at Paillardin & Co.'s were called. They were in the habit of meeting on the first Sunday of spring, somewhere in the country, and this year they invited Andrée, who, with her mother's permission, accepted with pleasure. She had not had a very gay winter, and this April fête was hailed by her with joy.

In the first place there had been an inundation of the Seine, and the water had reached the foundry where Pierre Naviel worked, and extinguished the furnaces. For a month, therefore, Naviel was out of work, and was compelled to suppress the weekly theatre and even to retrench in things that were more necessary.

He was a member of a Mutual Benefit Society, which secured the members a certain amount, in case of illness or lack of work. He had long been anxious to save money enough to enable his wife and daughter, in case of his death, to open a small establishment for the manufacture and sale of artificial flowers. But being a prudent man, he did not wish them to leave Paillardin & Co., before he had been able to put aside enough money to leave them as the base of operations.

The foundation of this small capital of which he dreamed, and which was no vague dream to a man like himself — determined and industrious — was already deposited in the savings bank, a thousand francs in his wife's name and a thousand in the name of his daughter.

During the winter, he had resolved to submit to any privations rather than disturb this nest egg. His

family encouraged this resolution. When spring came and Andrée had the opportunity of enjoying a day of happy gayety in the open air, her parents had no desire to throw any obstacles in her way. When she was quite ready, Pierre Naviel went to the door with her, and said when he left her, kissing her on the brow:

"Enjoy yourself, Andrée; but promise me, if Monsieur Paillardin is of the party, that you will make some excuse and come home."

"I promise you, dear father."

"I rely on your word, because, let me tell you, I distrust this man. I have good reasons for doing so, and your mother has told me enough to show me the kind of man he is."

At the foot of the stairs, Andrée saw her neighbor, who seemed to be waiting for her. For the last two months, they had spoken when they met on the stairs. Monsieur Lucien Despretz asked with interest after the health of Mademoiselle Andrée, and she inquired for his mother, and when Madame Despretz went on Sunday to market, she often stopped to chat with Madame Naviel. The two ladies soon became quite confidential, though they had not yet begun to visit each other; their intercourse was confined to the staircase and corridors.

But on the day of this April fête, Andrée fancied that the young man lingered to speak to her with an air of premeditation.

"Are you going to walk, Mademoiselle?" he asked, after courteously inquiring for her health.

"Yes, sir; I am going to the country. And you?"

"Oh! I? I am going nowhere in particular; but if you would kindly allow me to walk a little way by your side, I should be glad to speak to you of a matter of importance."

"I shall be very glad if you will go with me to the Station, where I have appointed to meet some of my friends from our work room, at ten o'clock."

"How far are you going into the country?"

"To a spot about half way between Rueil and

Malmaison. Margot, who is one of us, is to take us to dine at an uncle of hers, who, it seems, has a little country house and garden, the keys of which he entrusts to her when he is away and gives her, at the same time, full permission to gather the fruit. But we are all carrying something. I want to buy a *paté-de-foie-gras*, on my way to the station. The others carry what they choose, while Margot gives the dessert and even the wine."

"I am charmed with your frank manner of giving me these little particulars, Mademoiselle Andrée. Take my arm, unless you think me too tall for you."

"Not in the least!" she replied, laughing gaily, as she accepted the arm he offered. "I like tall men."

They crossed the Place de la Bastille in silence, and then entered the Boulevard. The town looked as if it were Sunday. The sun was shining brightly, but the doors of the shops were still closed. The windows, however, were open, and women were seen flitting about within in their negligé costumes. Occasionally a white arm would emerge to fasten a shutter or water some favorite flower; the loose sleeve would fall back, and show the dimpled contour.

On the upper balconies sat a man or two reading the newspapers in dressing gown and smoking cap, while little groups gathered on the sidewalk in Sunday apparel, before they took their way toward the various stations.

"Shall I give you my opinion in regard to this uncle of Mademoiselle Margot's—whom, by the way, I have not the honor of knowing?" asked Lucien Despretz.

"Go on."

"I don't believe he is her uncle any more than I am."

"Who is he, then?"

"Her protector, Mademoiselle. A person who occupies toward her precisely the position your employer, Monsieur Paillardin, proposed to occupy toward you, the night he took you to the Bouffes — I was there myself, Mademoiselle. To think of that woman making the audience almost believe that you were her

daughter! The idiots noticed you only because Nana had done so — and then that fool Paillardin was so conceited because he felt that he had brought you out! Oh! what a recollection I have of that wretched night, which, perhaps, you regret. It is only natural that a girl as handsome as yourself should like to be admired."

"I am not ugly, sir, I know, but admiration is not essential to my happiness. I was more pleased that evening of which you speak with some roses sent me by a certain Monsieur Lucien Despretz than with anything else, except the simple words that accompanied them. Those words proved to me that my unknown friend had divined that Andrée Naviel could have nothing in common with the woman of whom you speak."

"Then my bouquet pleased you?"

"Yes, very much. I kept it a long time, and when the roses faded I scattered the petals among my linen and bits of lace. Here, smell of my handkerchief."

Lucien Despretz smiled.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle," he murmured, with evident emotion. "This odor, then, will compel you to think of me occasionally."

"By the way, what had you to say to me?"

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle Andrée, if I hesitate, but the happiness of my entire life is involved."

"Why are you so grave? Go on. I am too much of a child possibly to understand what you are going to tell me, but at all events, I beg you to go on."

"I wish to inform you, Mademoiselle Andrée, that I intend to ask your parents to give you to me, but I am anxious to obtain authority from you first for this step. It was for this that I was waiting for you."

"Listen to me a moment, Monsieur Lucien. I wish before I marry to know something about the man who is to become my husband. I shall choose him, not for his good looks, nor for his fortune. I should take him because he was good, honorable, honest, and courageous; because, moreover, I believed him to be capable of loving a woman like myself, whose affection is worth the trouble of winning.

"Now, I do not know you. I can therefore promise nothing. Ask my father to admit you to the house, and tell him your intentions. Come and see us often, and bring your mother with you. We shall thus learn to know each other, and can soon discover if our tastes and our characters are in sympathy. I have never loved any one, and it depends on yourself to be the first and the last in my heart."

All this dialogue—grave and sensible as it was—was carried on as these two young persons walked side by side through the streets of Paris. Then came long intervals of silence, and some little hesitation at times—he not wishing to be too abrupt, nor to alarm her by an expression that was too strong, while she was coquettishly desirous to give him a certain amount of hope, yet not enough to inspire him with absolute confidence.

They finally reached the station, just opposite to which Andrée bought her *pâté-de-foie-gras*. Lucien took leave of her at the foot of the staircase, at the top of which her friends were waiting.

It wanted precisely ten minutes of ten by the large clock outside—they had just time to buy their tickets for the round trip. And at ten o'clock the cars whizzed out of the station.

The girls were like children, full of wild gayety, and almost irrepressible. At half-past ten they reached Rueil. Then, for three sous, they took seats in the tiny cars which were to carry them from Rueil to Port-Marly. This little trip they found infinitely amusing.

At Malmaison they descended, Margot conducting her friends to a gate in the stone wall which opened on the highway.

This door admitted them to a garden, which was merely an elongated square planted with pear trees. In the two corners of the garden furthest from the road were two houses overhung with clambering vines.

"We will dine there," said Margot, pointing to the house on the right. "Let us carry our baskets there now; my uncle's servant will arrange the table, and everything will be ready when we come back."

They entered the house, and found on the lower floor a large dining room simply but comfortably furnished.

One single object attracted Andrée's attention, which was a glass on the buffet which seemed to have been used that same morning and forgotten. She saw the initial engraved on the glass, and shivered. It was Paillardin's initial.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRE! FIRE!

IT was about six o'clock when the girls took their seats at the table. The sun was setting behind the woods, the shadow of the pear trees in full blossom, fell upon the gravel walks, all overgrown with weeds.

The wind began to blow, and rustled the leaves of the poplar trees. A gleam of red in the sky behind Marly attracted the attention of the girls, who were all, except Andrée, in the best of spirits.

Margot poured out the wine. The glass with an initial had disappeared; those which were on the table were all alike and perfectly plain. A petroleum lamp was lighted by Margot and placed in the centre of the table.

"We can't see much with this one lamp," cried one of the girls. "Where is the other?"

Margot did not answer the question.

"My good friends," she said, "we must drink to the health of the uncle who treats us to champagne."

She cut the wire and filled the glasses.

"To the health of the good uncle!" they all cried as with one voice.

Andrée was excessively thirsty, and drank from the glass which Margot kept filled without realizing what she was doing. Suddenly she felt her cheeks begin to burn. The objects around her assumed the most fantastic shapes. Her companions too began to be affected by the champagne. They laughed merrily, and accompanied their laughter with a jingle of their knives and forks on the plates and glasses, while all the time, Margot continued to open champagne with diabolical coolness. At dessert, there was a general cry:

"*La Timballe!* Margot; *la Timballe!*"

"In honor of Andrée Naviel, the pretty novice!" shouted Paillardin's favorite, as she leaped upon the table.

Then, in a voice which would have done credit to a *Café Concert*, and with the exaggerated tremolo of a diva of the Boulevard, Margot began to sing Judic's *couplets* in *la Timballe*. The others took up the chorus, keeping time on the glasses with their knives.

Andrée was saddened rather than exhilarated by all this noise, and when the air was finished, she observed that it was time to start for home, and that as for herself she should go at once. A shout of laughter greeted this statement.

"My dear Andrée," said Margot, "we intend to remain here for the night, and although we took our return tickets, it was only that you might not suspect our intention."

"Stay if you choose, of course; but I am going."

"Go then, my dear," answered Margot. "Go, my sweet one!"

"Where were my hat and mantle put?" asked Andrée.

"In the other house," answered Paillardin's favorite, with a sneer.

Andrée went out bareheaded into the garden. Rain had begun to fall in large drops, for during dinner heavy clouds had gathered in the sky.

Andrée saw a light in the opposite house, and concluded that the uncle's gardener resided there. She hurried toward the door, her heart all the time heavy with a vague fear; but reproaching herself for her folly she persisted. She was conscious that her nerves were not exactly right, for it seemed to her that the old pear trees in the garden waved her back.

As her foot touched the first step, she suddenly remembered the disagreeable impression produced on her by the sight of that glass on which was Paillardin's initial, and at that moment she beheld a shadow pass the lighted window—the shadow of a very stout man.

"Pshaw!" she said, half aloud, "of course it cannot

be he; and if it were, why should I be afraid? Have I not been alone with him repeatedly? He is called a bold man, but he would not dare be insolent to me. Men like Monsieur Paillardin never dare attack good women. If he were here he would, of course, have dined with us."

She knocked at the door. There was no reply. The door stood half way open, however, and she entered. Before her was a narrow stair-case, partially lighted from above. Andrée went slowly up stairs, and presently heard the lower door shut with a bang.

"Come up, my dear; come up, don't be afraid," said a voice in the upper corridor.

Andrée looked up, and saw Paillardin standing before her.

In his smile there was something absolutely devilish; but it was too late for Andrée to retreat. She therefore feigned confidence, and continued to ascend.

"I came for my mantle and my hat," she said quickly.

"But you can't go to Paris in this weather, my dear! I would never permit it."

"My parents will expect me."

"By no means. Margot telegraphed them that you would remain here all night."

"It is impossible, sir."

"Pardon me, my dear, but you will remain here in this room."

"I wish to leave this house at once, sir."

"The door is closed and you are in the trap, my pretty bird, for you must know that all this gay fête has been arranged by me merely to get you here. Besides, your companions are not pleased to see you so very cold to the head of the house of Paillardin & Co. The '*rosières*' are all civil to me — all but yourself."

"Monsieur Paillardin, this conduct is unworthy of a gentleman, and I assure you that if I am insulted here, I shall be amply avenged."

"And by whom, pray?"

"By my father."

"Your father, indeed! You will not dare to say one word to him. If you were silly enough for that, he would do nothing, for he knows very well that were he to make a scandal, it would interfere with your establishment in life. Now, do you understand this?"

These words showed Andrée the full extent of her peril, and she saw that there was but one course open for her. She took it, terrible as it was. She deliberately ascended the remaining stairs, and entered Paillardin's chamber. Through the open window came the voices of her companions, who were still singing at the supper table. Opposite the window, was a bed with a canopy. Around the room were numerous long mirrors. In a corner, on a Louis Quinze table, stood a lamp like the one she had seen at supper.

The girls had set fire to a punch probably, for the light that came through their casement was blue and flashing.

Paillardin locked the door and went toward the young girl, who stood behind an arm chair, near the lamp.

"You must see, my dear,' he said, "that I am the master here. This house stands too far from the road for any noise made in it to be heard, even if people were passing, which at this hour they are not. Your companions, moreover, are too busy to heed. Everything is in my favor, you see. I have adored you, Andrée, for a long time, and now I have made up my mind to tell you so!"

"I have not one word to say to you, sir, except that you are a miserable coward, and that I loathe and despise you!"

"You may just now, my dear; but later, when you see what I can do for you, the luxuries I can heap at your feet, you will change your opinion."

"Do not touch me," said the girl quietly. "I warn you!"

He caught her hands to tear them from the chair.

She clutched with desperate strength. She pulled them from him, and seizing the petroleum lamp, which she had taken care to keep within her reach, she threw it at him with all her strength. Paillardin received it full on his breast. The glass broke, the oil spread over his shirt and took fire. He lost his head, and ran wildly about the room, and then threw himself on the bed to stifle the flames, which by this time had reached the curtains of the bed. They blazed up and then fell a winding sheet of flames upon Paillardin's writhing form.

"Help! Andrée, for God's sake, call some one!"

Andrée ran to the window, and catching a vine that climbed along the wall, let herself down into the garden. It was none too soon, for the room was on fire. Paillardin was by this time fatally burned, and could do nothing for himself.

When the girls in the other house saw the flames pouring out of the windows, they fled from the place, crying: "Fire! fire!"

People from a distance, attracted by the light, hurried with ladders and water; but it was too late, Paillardin was dead.

The fire was rapidly extinguished. Andrée had disappeared. An inquest was held that same night.

Two of the girls, arrested at the station, related the story of the plot formed against Mademoiselle Naviel. The door of the house had been found closed and the window open, which led to the inference that the girl in her alarm had jumped from the window when the fire broke out.

There were many stories set afloat by minors who, tempted into this house, had spoken at a later date.

Andrée Naviel was not even summoned as a witness.

CHAPTER X.

THE GRAND REVIEW.

DURING the summer succeeding the tragic death of Monsieur Paillardin, the relations between the Despretz and the Naviels became very intimate. But as the latter family had left the Faubourg Saint Antoine and established themselves at Batignolles, it was less easy to see them. But the unavowed love which united Andrée and Lucien, sufficed to shorten distances.

Andrée had started in business on her own account. Her *clientèle* was assured. Her beauty had ripened, and the gravity and sweetness of her face and manners were very attractive. Her eyes had acquired a depth and meaning hitherto unknown to them, for she loved Lucien with her whole heart.

They talked over their future together, although no formal demand had yet been made to her father, as Lucien felt a certain pride and wished to better his condition before Andrée became his wife. He had entered a large commercial house in *La Rue Montmartre* as cashier, but this did not satisfy his ambition.

His aged mother was without resources, and he wished to put aside a certain sum which would bring her in a little independent income before he married. To attain this end, he imposed on himself absolute privations, but did not deem it wise to speak to Andrée of his motives, as he knew her well enough to be certain that she would claim her right to do her share.

There was, consequently, a little reserve between them, and their affection was regarded by their friends as merely the kindly liking of young people, who have many tastes in common. Madame Naviel, however, wished that the young man would come forward frankly, and one evening she took advantage of their

work-women having gone before Naviel himself came from the foundry, to speak with some seriousness to her daughter.

She advised her to have an explanation as soon as possible with Monsieur Despretz. Unfortunately, she said something which sounded very cruel to her daughter.

"He may have some suspicion of you in relation to Monsieur Paillardin."

"That is impossible!" cried Andrée; "however, I will have an explanation with him to-morrow. You know we are all going to the Grand Review in the *Bois de Boulogne*, and I shall have an excellent opportunity."

Andrée did not sleep that night. She wept much, and in the morning her eyes retained the traces of tears, which the loyalty of the man she loved should have prevented.

The next day, Lucien and his mother came to Batignolles in the eleven o'clock omnibus, and the two families took the noon train at the Batignolles station. Lucien asked for five second class tickets to Passy, for as they were to walk home by the *Champs-Elysées*, he did not want return tickets. The trains, frequently as they ran, were crowded to a degree, and very uncomfortable.

When they arrived at Passy, Andrée did not wait for Lucien to offer her his arm, she took it, and drew him on far in front of the others, and immediately turned down a narrow path where the trees keep out the sun.

Notwithstanding the pleasant weather, and the excitement attendant on their excursion, an unaccountable sadness weighed heavily on the hearts of these young persons.

When they were alone, Andrée looked up in his face, and with a world of feeling in her deep eyes, she said:

"You do not believe, Monsieur Lucien, in the goodness of woman?"

"Do not believe in woman, did you say, Andrée? Indeed, I do, more especially since I met you."

"Then speak to me frankly. Admit that since the terrible night, when my former employer fell a victim to the snare he laid for me—"

"Do not speak of that night, Andrée. I believe in your purity, as I do in that of my mother. Do you think that life would be endurable to me if I doubted you. No, the only woman I have ever loved, the only woman I have ever wished to marry, could not have fallen a victim to that vile Paillardin. You might tell me so, Andrée, and I should not believe it."

"But suppose it were so, nevertheless?"

"I should always esteem you, and always love you, but I should not have the courage to make you my wife."

"I thank you for your frankness, my friend, but do me the justice to believe that I should have had the delicacy to release you from your engagement undecided as it is."

"And you would have done well, Andrée, for the man who gives himself entirely to the woman he loves, the man who comes to his fiancée and says to her—'take me with all my illusions, with all my dreams; my life is yours, my heart has never wandered, I have never looked on any other woman than yourself, I have asked no other girl to love me,—Andrée, the man who can say this has a right to demand the same purity from the woman he marries, and it matters little what demi-philosophers say, or what those fools think, who believe that a man is not a man until he has wasted the treasures of his soul on worthless women."

"Then, Lucien, you never loved any other woman than myself?"

"None, Andrée; I swear it."

"Then, you are he of whom I dreamed when I was a mere child, and I am she for whom you have waited! Listen to me. I have been very sad. My mother said something that cut me cruelly, and I wept all night. She told me yesterday that you doubted me."

"But you did not believe it, child? I see now the cause of your sadness. Do you know, Andrée,

why I have not yet spoken to your parents? It is that you are too rich for me now. I have my old mother to support."

"Well! And cannot I assist you in that? You are proud, my love, and too haughty towards your little Andrée, and I cannot understand you."

They had by this time reached the lake, where they waited for their parents, who were obliged to walk slowly on account of Madame Despretz, who was easily fatigued.

The *Bois de Boulogne* was crowded with people.

The Review taking place on Sunday, all the Faubourgs and all the poorer quarters of the city furnished their contingents. Whole families in Sunday costume came on foot, and carriages began to roll past by nine o'clock in the morning. Omnibuses filled with the police stopped at the Cascade. The Guards of Paris, appointed to keep order for the day, marched in double file along the avenues.

At the same time, long columns of artillery and cavalry started from Versailles, from Saint Germain and Vincennes, and several regiments, that had arrived at dawn, bivouacked in the woods.

Artisans and soldiers fraternized, and the birds alighted on the stacked arms, and warbled a Hymn of Praise and the *Marseillaise* of love.

The sunlight struck the dewdrops on the leaves, and caused them to sparkle like diamonds.

The people were in the best of spirits, as they watched the troops concentrate. They came through the *Avenue Longchamps*, through the *Avenue des Lacs*, by the *Pont de Saint Cloud* and by the *Pont de Suresnes*, marching with bands playing and colors flying.

The bugle call of the Hussars came from the direction of Paris. The artillery from Versailles swept on at full speed, followed by one brigade of cuirassiers and a regiment of dragoons. Crowds of bourgeois, of working people, and of women and children came from every point. Every train from Versailles was loaded

down, as were the boats from Passy, Neuilly, and Auteuil.

At noon the different positions indicated by the staff officers were occupied.

The infantry formed three lines parallel with the tribunes.

Behind the infantry, the artillery were massed in one line, while the cavalry occupied a fifth along the road to Boulogne.

Superb equipages began to arrive, and the tribunes gradually filled.

Charming toilettes began to bloom under the tents. Light parasols were like luminous spots against the black clothing of the men. Fans moved among the bouquets, like the wings of gay butterflies fluttering over the flowers and the women.

Afar off in the shadow of the woods family groups were resting.

Andrée and Lucien had just turned into an avenue which led to Longchamps, when a loud cry was heard.

"Remove them! Remove them!" shouted the excited crowd.

CHAPTER XI.

DANGER IN THE AIR.

WOMEN'S shrieks and sobs rent the air, but the ferocious shouts of the populace drowned their cries.

Lucien had only time to draw Andrée aside, for the human whirlwind was sweeping toward them. The carriages hastily drew up, and their inmates rose to see what was going on. And from superb landaus, cabs, and coupés, from tilburys and trotting wagons, from hotel omnibuses and from family carrioles, curious heads were extended.

Carefully gloved men uttered exclamations of disgust, young women, with their babies held in the arms of nurses on the seats opposite, said, with a shrug of the shoulders:

"It is odious!"

"It is a disgrace to Paris!"

"All these women ought to be shut up at Saint-Lazare!"

"Pshaw!" answered a young fellow, with a glass in his eye, "since the Republic there have been no real fêtes—only beggars and such women as these are to be seen!"

The curious stood gazing at two women who had been arrested, and were being taken away by four men. They refused to take a step, and fell on their knees in the avenue, imploring mercy.

"To Saint-Lazare!" cried the crowd—while near the lake a chocolate vender kept his little bell ringing, the silvery tinkle of which mingled strangely with the ferocious hisses of the honest people.

The police officers, unable to advance, left the two women lying in the mud, while they proceeded to tie them together. In vain did they struggle. In vain did one of them cry out, amid convulsive sobs:

"Mamma! Oh! Mamma!"

"Good Heavens!" said Andrée hoarsely, and turning very pale. "I know that voice!—It is Margot's, I am sure!"

She dragged Lucien by the arm until they reached a place where she could see.

Yes, it was Margot, who after the death of Paillardin, finding no new protector, had descended to this depth.

In a very few weeks she had sunk very low. She associated with Jules, Monsieur Paillardin's former valet. This man was an indolent fellow, and lived on the money Margot brought in, beating her when she returned with none.

In spite of all police regulations, therefore, she was open in her defiance of the law, and was finally arrested, with another woman guilty of the same offence.

Margot continued to call "Mamma! Mamma!" and the man who had arrested her, out of all patience, gave her a kick, and bade her hold her peace.

Andrée recognized his voice. This tall, angular creature, wearing enormous blue glasses, was *Face-à-Claques*, the former clown, who, having been beaten and kicked by Hercules to his heart's content, now in his turn kicked this poor wretch.

He was conscious of his degradation, realized fully to whom it was due, and felt for the woman who had betrayed him, a strange hatred, born of love, but now transformed to jealous contempt.

In spite of Lucien, who tried to keep her back, Andrée went deliberately toward this man.

The crowd became perfectly silent when they beheld this beautiful girl, whose purity was written on her face.

"Why did you strike that woman?" she asked with an air of authority.

"What is that to you, if you are an order-loving girl?" answered the former clown. "Do you call that thing a woman? By what name, then, would you call your mother?"

The people did not understand. Why did this young lady undertake the defence of a such a person. Nevertheless, Andrée's interference altered public opinion. A murmur arose. They said it was a shame to beat a woman in this way at a public fête and shock the nerves of the people. What had she done, after all?

Some fishwomen lifted their hands and shouted:

"Let those women alone! You are spies, all of you! Either let them alone, or provide them with food. Don't you suppose they want to eat as well as yourselves?"

This sudden outbreak of that generosity which lies dormant in the hearts of the people now rose against those men who could strike a woman.

The former clown struck an attitude, and shouted back:

"What would you people have? We are only doing our duty. We are paid to arrest these women, and we are doing so. Do you think we can live without eating? Would you have us steal? Once upon a time I was with a traveling circus. I was engaged by the Hercules, who beat me. Now, it is my turn to do the beating. You see, my friends, it is always best to be on the side of the handle."

During this conversation one of the men had been sent for reinforcements, and came back followed by twelve policemen and a carriage.

The two women, bound like beasts for the shambles, still lay on the sand. The men dragged them to the carriage, and, lifting them both together, pitched them in.

Then the indignation of the people found voice once more; they declaimed against the brutality of the police force. A formidable cry arose:

"Down with the spies! Duck them!"

There was a great deal of pushing and hustling — evidently a row was imminent. The twelve policemen struggled to keep together; they surrounded the fiacre in which the two women lay. Fortunately a detachment

of the Paris Guard came to the help of the law. Just at this moment a regiment of cuirassiers passed rapidly by. All this cavalry was late, and anxious to reach the ground before the official cortège.

The crowd separated to permit the passage of this body of men, and then closed up again, but in this brief space of time the carriage in which Margot was to be taken to the Préfecture disappeared through a cross alley.

Lucien and Andrée were separated from their families, and the young man in vain attempted to dissipate the painful impression which Andrée had received.

She could not recover from the shock of seeing Margot, her former daily companion, fallen thus low, tied like an animal, beaten and kicked, and then thrust into this carriage with her associate.

The green leaves on the trees rustled softly in the breeze; the sky was exquisitely blue; an occasional white cloud was reflected in the lake. The momentary anger caused by the brutality of the police was gradually calmed by the increasing heat of the June sun.

Lucien and Andrée walked slowly on, and when they reached the Cascade, found room for both on the turf. Just as they had established themselves, a jet of white smoke enveloped one of the bastions of Mont Valerien, followed by the report of the cannon; the horses attached to the carriages reared and plunged, drums beat, and the bands stationed at different points began to play. Cries of "*Vive la Republique!*" rent the air.

Afar off coming from the *Avenue de Longchamps* was the Marshal, holding his hat with its long white plume in his hand. His horse was black and showy, while around him rode his brilliant staff, with feathers and manes streaming in the air.

Behind came the Spahis, seated on their small horses, whose long tails were braided with ribbons, and whose fantastic movements seemed designed to call attention to the brilliancy of their Arab mantles.

This spectacle flashed by like a vision of human power.

At the same moment, a blue landau with silver harness, drawn by four horses, advanced at a sharp trot.

A woman with golden hair, dressed in a robe of white satin fitting close to her form, and covered with jewels, reclined opposite two men. Her feet rested on the seat between them, and her sweeping skirts allowed her ankles to be seen through the flesh-colored stockings which covered them. Two footmen were behind, and two black postilions on the horses. The crowd was dazzled by this apparition, and admired with open eyes and mouth all the elegant articles.

But from the position in which Andrée sat, she perceived only Nana's dazzling hair, and wondered if she made her *entrée* on the scene intentionally just when she did, almost as if escorted by the Presidential cortège.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FATE OF THE BLUE LANDAU.

THE two men who made themselves thus conspicuous in Nana's carriage were d'Albigny and the Prince de Mulhausen. The latter was a German, transplanted to the banks of the Seine — pompous and haughty, posing as a man of *bonnes fortunes*, and showing himself with Nana out of love of notoriety. He had never been in the least smitten with Nana, but he liked to be looked upon as her admirer.

As to d'Albigny, he was the type of a man who has lost all social position — a man who puts on many airs, but has little honor; who will fight for a word, if not for a thing; who swaggers in the *Salles d'Armes* in the morning, and is a very Jew at the Bourse between noon and four o'clock, and in the evening participates in the fêtes of the dissipated.

He lived in great style, breakfasted at Bignon's, supped at the *Café Anglais*, was dressed by Toirés, and lived extravagantly on the money of others.

Simpletons fancied that it was he who paid for Nana's extravagances. She permitted them to think so uncontradicted.

He had launched her, however, and had fought three duels for her, and as he was looked upon as one of the arbiters of elegance in Paris, he easily found idiots like Mulhausen who imitated him.

Nana and d'Albigny were, nevertheless, several times on the point of separating for ever, but she always came back to him, more especially now that she was eight times a millionaire, and needed some one to manage her affairs for her.

D'Albigny cost her two hundred thousand francs per annum, but he prevented her from losing double that amount. By investing Nana's money, and by attend-

ing to the affairs of her house and mounting guard over its expenditures, he found the means of gratifying his own personal desires and fancies.

The famous landau and horses, which were used by Nana for the first time on the day of the fête, and which had created such a sensation, had been bought by him for fifty thousand francs, although he told her he had paid eighty thousand for them. He had secured the horses at his own price, and Nana had paid him just what he asked for them. In reality, she had lost nothing, though her Barnum, as she cynically called him, had made two thousand louis.

Among her adorers Nana counted one honest man—Stog, the Postmaster-General. He had never been Nana's favorite, although he was smitten with her, and she was well disposed toward him.

Stog was of a violent disposition. Tall, slender and nervous, sanguine to excess — his eyes were often bloodshot, and two scarlet spots were on his high cheek bones. His hair was thick, his black moustache was fiercely waxed, his nose was curved like the beak of an eagle, his chin was prominent, and indicated an energetic will, while his muscular hands told of the strength to put all his resolutions into practice.

Stog had married early. His wife was a *dévote*, and had borne him two children—a boy now ten years of age and a girl of fifteen. His wife having been dowerless, the house of the Postmaster-General was extremely modest.

He had never attempted to become Nana's favorite, as he well knew that a year of his modest salary would not support her for a month. He never, in fact, came to her house except on the days of her general receptions.

This self-possession and this haughty coolness did not wound her vanity, but it piqued her. Nana at last had found a seeming resistance, over which she was anxious to triumph.

It was not a sufficient gratification to her vanity to see Stog on her gala days, when all the rest of her world

were there. The evening before the Grand Review, she had done her best to induce him to take a seat in her carriage that she might exhibit her power over him, but he succeeded in avoiding this danger.

Nana now perceived him in the *tribune d'honneur*, and showed her vexation so plainly that the German rallied her upon it.

"Mulhausen!" she cried, revenging her defeat with Stog on the German, "Mulhausen! applaud quickly, that is the battalion *Saint Cyr* that is coming. Clap your hands — louder! — louder!"

Mulhausen pretended to laugh under his blond moustache, as he sat stiff and erect, his broad shoulders crowned by a head covered with faded looking light hair, and with his red ears setting out on either side.

And again Nana issued her commands:

"Applaud! Mulhausen, I insist upon it."

Mulhausen obeyed, applauding with the tips of his gloved fingers, feeling the color mount to his very brow as the woman before him amused herself by insulting Germany in his person.

The battalion of *Saint Cyr* continued to advance in magnificent order under the summer sun.

Guns glittered on every robust shoulder, each knee moved simultaneously with the same alertness, and each arm swung with the same mechanical rhythm.

It was the flower and the hope of the army that was passing—the hope of new France. The young generation, baptized in the sufferings of those who had gone before, were firmly resolute in their intention to compel all other nations to respect France, their country!

Afar off on the plain the three lines of artillery were changing their position. The regiments formed successively in line of march in columns of thirty-two files, each headed by a band of music and colors flying.

Glittering steel filled the green extent of the hippodrome, and from all the surrounding heights, from Suresnes, and the slopes of Mont-Valérien, from the depths of the wood, and from all the avenues rose the shouts of the people:

"*Vive la Republique!*"
"*Vive l'Armeé!*"
"*Vive la France!*"

The Republican Guard and the *Gendarmes Mobiles* followed.

Then came the infantry. Thirty thousand men, massed in divisions, performed all their evolutions without once breaking rank, and looked as fresh as if they had not marched a step that day.

The tribunes applauded each division with true French enthusiasm. The officers, as they marched, saluted the *Chef d'Etat* with their sabres.

When all the infantry had passed, space was left for the movements of the artillery, and eighteen batteries dashed on at full gallop. At the further end of the plain, the heavy carriages wheeled. Two brigades assisted in these movements with the regularity of machines. The enthusiasm of the people broke out in redoubled shouts of "*Vive la France!*"

"*Vive la France!*" was not that saying much, was not that saying all in three words? France, notwithstanding all her faults and all her weaknesses, was she not the generous sister of the humiliated, the ever living hope of all proscribed races? To shout *Vive la France* was to utter the cry of the Future—the cry of universal fraternity and liberty.

"Mulhausen," said Nana, "you are as grave as a senator on the day of a national fête. This cannot be permitted. You must cry *Vive la France*, or I will never be seen in public with you again."

At first, the German refused.

Then she rose to her feet and, in order to annoy her companion, applauded violently with her fan.

D'Albigny laughed in his sleeve. He knew that Mulhausen was hopelessly ruined, that he had not more than a million of louis left.

Nana, with true feminine obstinacy, was determined to compel Mulhausen to listen to reason, and said with biting sarcasm:

"Admit, Prince, that you are sadly afraid of Bismarck,

that you all cringe like school boys before him, otherwise you would not refuse to utter a word of praise for Nana's native land."

"*Vive la France!*" vociferated Mulhausen, with concentrated rage.

"Bravo! bravo, Prince!" laughed Nana.

It was now five o'clock. The sun was sinking behind a horizontal cloud of dark slate color, barred with gold.

Streaks of red ochre below, and luminous shafts of red, like glowing flames, were partially veiled by fleecy clouds.

The sloping rays of the sun gilded the tops of the trees.

The blue landau rolled on until at the *rond-point* they encountered a column of artillery, which at the same moment sounded a bugle call. The four horses reared simultaneously. The two colored postilions were thrown, and rolled under the wheels. The horses, no longer restrained, started off at full gallop into the crowds of carriages, horsemen, and soldiers, which were packed in a dense mass the length of the avenue.

Other horses were frightened, and broke away.

The footmen at the beginning of the accident had leaped to the ground. D'Albigny clambered out on the pole, and then, mounting one of the horses, seized the bridle, but it was too late to be of much service.

Mulhausen clutched the sides of the landau.

Nana, very calm, turned towards him and said:

"It looks to me, my dear Prince, as if we were going to have our necks broken."

"Yes," answered the German, his teeth chattering with fear, "our fates are sealed!"

Nana could not help laughing at his pallid face.

When the *Elysée* was reached, the horses made a sharp turn, dragging the landau across one of the side streets.

Two policemen snatched at the heads of the animals. One of the men lost his balance and fell; the other was trampled on by the horses. Cries of frightened women and children rent the air. There was a general stampede before the infuriated animals.

CHAPTER XIII.

DREAMS AND FANCIES.

AT the moment when this accident occurred, Andrée Naviel, who was very weary, had just taken a chair with Lucien at her side. The horses and the carriage swept down upon them with such mad fury that they had not time to get out of the way.

Monsieur Despretz instinctively threw himself between his betrothed and the danger, snatching desperately at the broken reins, one of which caught Andrée as in a lasso and dragged her along. Fortunately the foremost horse ran against a tree and fell; the others rolled over him in a confused mass.

Lucien lifted Andrée, who had fainted and was covered with blood. Nana clambered from the carriage with the agility of a clown. The Marquis struggled out from among the horses, for, as usual, d'Albigny had fallen on his feet.

A policeman ran to report at the office, and the wounded were carried into a neighboring restaurant. Andrée was placed on a bench, where she soon recovered.

Nana looked at her with strange earnestness; then approaching the girl, she said gently:

"My child, you are hurt. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, Madame," Andrée answered courteously. "I am more frightened than hurt, I fancy."

"This is not the first time I have seen you, I am sure," said Nana. "You are very pretty. If this gentleman be your admirer, I congratulate him," she added, turning toward Lucien.

"And I, too," interposed Mulhausen. "I remember Mademoiselle very well from having seen her one evening at the Bouffes."

Andrée colored.

"Permit me to offer you my ear-rings, in exchange for yours," said Nana. "We shall both, in that way, preserve a souvenir of this day. Do you agree to this, my child?"

"I think Mulhausen should also offer some souvenir to Mademoiselle, in memory of this day," sneered d'Albigny, "for I fancy that our dear Prince will not easily forget it."

"You have divined my intentions with your usual perspicuity," answered Mulhausen, as he removed his glove in order to take off one of his rings.

"I can accept nothing," said Andrée, gravely. "My ear-rings are a gift from this gentleman, who is my betrothed."

"She is positively adorable," murmured Mulhausen in the ear of d'Albigny.

"Permit me to call on you, at all events, in order to ascertain that you have received no injury," persisted Nana.

"Thanks, Madame. This is my card."

"Ah! you are a florist, I see. You are very courageous, my dear, to work when you are so very beautiful. To-morrow, then, I will call and see your flowers and yourself. D'Albigny, call a carriage, if you please. Mulhausen, are you coming?"

"Thanks, Madame; I prefer my feet for the rest of the day."

Nana uttered a ringing laugh, as she entered a *fiacre* which the Marquis had stopped.

"Why the deuce do you go near that child? She is a good little thing," grumbled d'Albigny, "and you had best let her alone."

"I am the best judge of that," answered Nana.

Andrée took Lucien's arm and tried to walk; but she felt such agony in her right foot that she became faint and dizzy. Lucien hailed a coachman going toward the *Arc de Triomph*, and gave Andrée's address. At the same moment, the German stepped forward and offered his hand to Andrée to assist her.

She thanked him coldly, and turned to her betrothed. Her parents had been at home an hour when the young people entered.

Lucien described the danger in which Andrée had been. The girl herself said little, but insisted on going to the table with the others. The pain in her foot, however, momentarily increased. Suddenly she turned deadly pale, and Lucien had only time to prevent her from falling, when she lost consciousness.

When she revived she said to her betrothed:

"I cannot stay in this room, as I would like to do. Help me to my room, please."

Madame Naviel accompanied them, and after Lucien had left, assisted Andrée to undress. The girl's foot was greatly inflamed, and there was a contusion on the back of the neck, just at the roots of the hair.

Hardly was she in bed, than delirium set in. Naviel himself went for a physician, and Lucien begged that he might remain in the house all night.

"I venture, dear Madame, to ask this favor, because I have spoken very frankly to your daughter to-day. I was waiting, before making my formal application to you, until my position was more worthy of her — but I implore you to look upon me from this hour as her betrothed and your son. To-morrow, my mother will call upon you, and make her wishes in the matter known to yourself and Monsieur Naviel."

"We shall regard you in future as a member of our family," answered Madame Naviel. "My husband has authorized me to say that he will not oppose his daughter's wishes. Remain then, if you choose, and assist us in taking care of her."

Madame Despretz was also sent for, and was soon seated by the bedside.

Andrée was very pale, with the exception of a bright spot of color on each cheek. She suddenly raised herself on her pillows, and with wide-open, affrighted eyes, cried aloud:

"Leave me, Nana! No, I am not like you. Why

are you here? Leave me, Madame! Ah! I was sure that you would bring me misfortune!"

The doctor came, examined the sick girl, wrote his prescription and went away, saying to the father:

"The injury to the foot is not grave; but I am anxious about the delirium. Is this young person of a nervous, excitable temperament? Is she particularly impressionable?"

"Yes," said Pierre Naviel, "and the child is far from strong."

"Ah! these girls of twenty are troublesome to manage," answered the doctor. "You must be very careful of her."

"Careful! careful!" grumbled the engineer. "It is very easy to talk about being careful. Poor child! I try to do my duty by her. Fortunately, she is in love with an excellent young fellow. I have done my very best to give her good ideas, and she has an honest living ready to her hand. The future rests with her—all the same though, I shall keep my eyes open."

He went to his daughter's room, and found her mother and Lucien watching her anxiously. Tears stood in the eyes of the young man. The honest workman went up to him and said, with rough affection:

"What! tears, and you a man? Tut, tut, the child is in no danger. You may stay though, and help take care of her, if you have no confidence in us."

"He has a right to stay," whispered Madame Naviel, "for to-night he spoke to me of his affection for her. It is all settled between us. I said 'yes' for you and for myself, as I knew what you thought about it. As soon as she is well, we will buy her *trousseau*. She won't object."

"Very well, wife, very well; that is your affair. I leave it all to you." And he went into the kitchen to light his pipe, and sat down there to smoke.

Madame Despretz and her son remained with Andrée. The old lady was excessively fatigued, and it was not long before she was asleep in her chair. Lucien sat

near the bed, and never removed his eyes from his beloved.

The night wore on, and as the city sank into comparative quiet, the whistles of the various locomotives as they whistled into their stations, became more distinct.

Andrée suddenly started up in bed and looked at Lucien presently, as if she recognized him, in spite of the confusion of her brain. She held out her hand. He passed his arm around her and placed her again on the pillow, where she slept peacefully for an hour, during which time Madame Naviel came in several times.

About eleven o'clock, Monsieur Naviel went to bed, as he was obliged to be up at an early hour to go to his work.

Madame Naviel wished to remain in the room, but Lucien pointed out to her that she must husband her strength, particularly as she must be in the work-room during the absence of her daughter, and finally induced her to lie down for two or three hours, while his mother and himself remained with Andrée.

Madame Naviel yielded to his reasoning, and he continued to watch in the mysterious silence of this room into which his dreams had long since penetrated.

About midnight the young girl started up once more, and, stretching out her arms to Lucien, said:

"At last, dear, I am your wife. I waited until now, that I might tell you softly, with my hand in yours, how dearly I love you. Come nearer your Andrée, my beloved! Am I so ugly that I frighten you? Are you afraid to feel my arms around your neck? Ah! those cool white roses—how sweet they were!"

He stooped over her, his lips met hers in one long kiss, and then, reproaching himself for having thus responded to this appeal of unconscious delirium, he unclasped her arms from around his neck, and said gently:

"Sleep, my beloved, sleep. I am here, and I love

you with my whole soul. I will watch by your side and protect you."

As if she understood him, she closed her eyes wearily, the shadow of her long lashes resting on her pale cheeks. Her hands dropped helplessly by her side, with the fingers extended.

At this moment Madame Naviel, aroused by Andrée's voice, entered the room, but, seeing her asleep, returned to the sofa in the salon.

CHAPTER XIV.

TEMPTATION.

THE evening of the review Stog heard at the club of the accident that had happened to Nana's carriage. He hastily snatched his hat and light overcoat and hurried into the street, where he stopped the first *fiacre* he saw.

Ten minutes later he entered Nana's hôtel. She received him in her boudoir. This boudoir was a present from Mulhausen. On one side was a divan of rosewood encrusted with tiny figures painted in enamel. An upright piano, ornamented with repoussé silver work, stood in one corner. In another corner was a round table in the style of the Empire; it had four gilded feet, and the slab was of lapis lazuli.

On the mantel was a mirror, of which the frame was crystal, and represented vine leaves and stalks, from which fell clusters of grapes. These grapes were amethysts. Two candelabra in the same style represented heavy stalks with the same purple grapes. A chandelier that corresponded hung from the centre of the room. A Candahar rug covered the centre of the floor. The mantel was also of crystal; in the centre was a silver "N" surmounted by a wreath of cut topazes.

Before the fender lay a tiger skin, and in the head were set as eyes, two gorgeous rubies which had belonged to that unhappy Rajah who had been ruined in one short week, and then fled to Benares.

Nana was alone when Stog entered. She advanced to meet him, and, extending her hand, said:

"At last! You have really done me the honor to call upon me when my rooms are not full!"

"I only heard within ten minutes of the accident that happened to your carriage to-day, and I of course hurried here to make inquiries."

"What a singular person you are, my dear Stog! You came, then, from pure politeness? I don't believe you. You choose to affect a certain coldness toward me which you are in reality far from feeling. Why this farce? I know you thoroughly. Come now, Stog—most stoical Stog, admit that you are crazy about Nana."

"You are very keen, Nana, but I am accustomed to your cruelty. You are right, though—I would lay down my life for you."

"Listen to me a moment, Stog. You say you would lay down your life for me; you come to my receptions on rainy days without taking the trouble to summon a carriage; you place your wet hat on the furniture in my salon. You are frightfully near-sighted, and you generally walk on the lace of my skirts at least six times in the course of each visit, and I find you a very expensive visitor! And yet I ask very little from you, almost nothing; a little locket, perhaps—a locket which will hold your portrait, and on the back our initials intertwined. Will you give it to me?"

"Yes, Nana, you shall have it; but remember that d'Albigny even must not see it—d'Albigny least of all. You will be good, Nana? You will not take advantage of your power over me?"

"Upon my word, my poor friend, I begin to think you had best leave me, and never return again. Take my advice, and go."

"I cannot leave you, Nana!"

"Then bring me the locket. Ah! Stog, you do not know me yet."

She rose as she spoke, and, going to him, placed her hands on his two shoulders and looked him full in the eyes.

"I will buy the locket," Stog answered in a hoarse whisper, "but if you ever breathe a word about it, I will kill you and then myself!"

"Do people do that sort of thing nowadays? No, it would be a silly thing on your part. You will live, Stog, you will live for my sake."

Nana threw herself on the divan in the attitude of an antique statue. She raised her arms to support her head on her clasped hands. Her appearance was simply exquisite. From among clouds of lace emerged an oriental slipper embroidered with pearls.

"Have you not a daughter, Stog?" she asked, after a brief silence.

"Why do you ask that, Nana?"

"Answer me, have you a daughter?"

"Yes. What then?"

She hesitated, feeling that she was treading on the verge of sentiments which she knew were totally different from her own, and hardly knowing what to say.

Stog looked at her inquisitively.

"I might be able to help you to marry her well," she said, slowly. "You might find some difficulty in finding just the husband for her you would like."

This man, whose past was spotless, awoke with a start as from a bad dream.

"You marry my daughter!" he exclaimed; "and to whom, pray? To one of your admirers, possibly. To d'Albigny, perhaps."

D'Albigny entered at this moment.

"Ah!" he said, in a tone of bitter mockery, "if the Marquis d'Albigny did you the honor to accept the daughter of a man who sprang from nothing, like yourself, you ought to be very grateful — yes, sir, very grateful. But do not be troubled, the Marquis d'Albigny has no fancy for matrimony."

"I see that walls here have ears," Stog observed with some asperity.

"It is as well they should, since these men have none."

"I don't know about men," answered Stog, taking a step toward d'Albigny; "I only speak of a Marquis who has very long ones — long enough, at least, to fit him for the post of spy to Madame —"

"Enough, gentlemen!" interrupted Nana, rising with a bound and placing herself between the two

men. "I will have no quarrelling here. No blood shall be shed on my account."

"Do not fear," said Stog, "I will not fight with this —— gentleman."

"I fight with no one, sir," d'Albigny replied; "because I have nothing to do with other than respectable people."

"That is the reasoning of a coward, sir. I only ask that for one week you shall abstain from robbing any one, and that you shall prove this to my satisfaction."

"But how can he?" asked Nana.

"Your assurance will be enough, Madame. You see I am not exacting. If in a week you do not send me the certificate for which I ask, I shall consider that you cannot. If you send it, I will come here to your hôtel with two seconds. I know that you give a fête next Sunday evening. Then and there I will publicly chastise your —— favorite."

"As you please, sir," sneered the Marquis. "You will lose nothing by waiting. You spoke a little while ago of killing yourself, and I will spare you that trouble."

Stog, without replying, saluted Nana coldly and disappeared behind the silken *portière*.

"You made a great mistake, Marquis!" said Nana sharply, when she was alone with d'Albigny.

"How so?"

"Although I was foolish to speak to him of marrying his daughter, I still might have obtained what I asked."

"What on earth did you want of that locket?"

"To use against them, if I pleased. The Postmaster General might be of great use to me on some occasion."

"It is a species of blackmail which might compromise us both very seriously my dear, and coming in as I did was the best thing possible. I have now a very decided desire to get rid of an inconvenient rival."

"Are you going out this evening?"

"Yes; to the club."

"Are you obliged to do so?"

"If I were not, I should remain here with you, Nana. But the truth is, my pockets are empty. By the way, did you know that three of your horses have been shot?"

"It is most unfortunate."

"Unfortunate, indeed!" he answered, as he left the room whistling an air from "*Robert*."

CHAPTER XV.

NANA'S VISIT.

ANDRÉE slept until dawn. When she awoke, Madame Naviel had been up a long time. She had lighted a furnace in the kitchen and made coffee. She came into her daughter's room with a cup for Lucien just as Andrée opened her eyes. When the young girl saw Lucien she colored.

"You here!" she murmured.

"Why of course," said her mother. "He insisted on acting as nurse, and would not even allow me to help him."

Madame Despretz awoke at the same moment, a little stiffened by this uncomfortable night.

"It would have been better had you gone to your bed, dear mother," said her son, affectionately.

"I remained here in order that dear Madame Naviel, who has so much to do, might get a few hour's sleep."

Madame Despretz adored her son, and respected his abilities. She had had a melancholy youth, which left upon her an uneffaceable impression, and yet she had been beautiful and been adored. Perhaps she had suffered from over sensitiveness. A tinge of bitterness in her smile indicated that some secret sorrow lurked in the heart of this aged woman. In her large, black eyes the fire was not quite extinct, and all the life in her pale, ivory-tinted face seemed centered in these eyes.

She insisted on aiding Madame Naviel in her household labors, that she might the sooner get to her flowers.

Monsieur Naviel had been gone an hour. He had risen several times in the night and gone to Andrée's door to listen. Hearing her breathe regularly, he had gone softly away, unwilling to disturb her. The dawn came in through the open windows; the night lamp flickered and went out.

The rich purple cups of the morning glories clambering over the windows were full of dew. The milk-carts lumbered heavily up the street, and along the granite pavements the automatic labors of the street sweepers were heard. A blackbird sang in the chestnut trees on the square.

"Do you hear that note?" asked Andrée, quickly. "It has waked me for the last fortnight."

"And did you rise at this hour?"

"Of course I did. I like it. It is a time that one is sure of, and I can do everything better than by the light of the lamps."

"You must not talk any more, Andrée. You had a great deal of fever during the night, and if you knew—"

"Knew what?"

"Nothing."

"I insist on knowing."

"You said, then, many things you would not say now."

"What sort of things?"

"Oh! only that you loved me very dearly."

"Is that all?"

"No; you declared you were my wife, and you put your arms around me."

"Is that the truth? No, I never did that—I am sure I never did."

"What does it matter? You were in a high fever, and said what you did not really think. To calm you, I took you up as if you had been a little child, and when your head rested on my shoulder, you went to sleep."

"With my head upon your shoulder?"

"Only for a moment, for I placed you on your pillows again."

Andrée was never prettier than now. Her eyes blazed with fever, her cheeks were brightly colored, and in her smile there was a new expression.

On the table, near the window, was a cage, in which a goldfinch hopped and twittered. He gave an

occasional peck with his bill on the bars, and looked inquiringly at Lucien, whose appearance in Andrée's room at that hour seemed to occasion him intense curiosity.

Mademoiselle Naviel said that she intended to rise, and Lucien scolded her, as if she had been a spoiled child. Finally, she promised not to move until he came back at night.

About eight o'clock the young man departed, hurrying to the establishment of which he was a member, and Madame Despretz took the opportunity of her son's absence to go to her own home for a few hours.

Andrée was, therefore, alone with her mother, the work-women, as they came, only entoring her room to inquire how she was, having been informed by the concierge of what had taken place.

The morning passed away without incident.

Madame Naviel sat at her work table, which was drawn up near the bed. She did not speak, and Andrée watched her with half-closed eyes.

Occasionally, her mother asked her a question. They talked together of pretty Margot, so rudely punished, and of Nana, who, without intending it, had so nearly caused Andrée's death.

"If she comes here, we will receive her politely," said Madame Naviel; "women such as she, give work to the people."

As she spoke, she carefully lifted with her tiny steel pincers the petals of a rose, on which she was at work, and placed them around the yellow stamens, fastening them with a strong wire until the rose was large enough. To each petal she gave a form and an individuality, and endeavored to imitate the infinite variety of Nature.

When the rose was mounted on the stem, and wrapped around with its strips of green paper, she arranged the leaves on the right and left, carefully concealing, with the same green tissue paper, where they were fastened.

Andrée lay thinking of Lucien Despretz. She felt

proud to know that he had risked his life for her, when he rushed between the maddened horses and herself. Her heart and her cheeks grew hot, as she wondered what she had said to him in her delirium—things, probably, that she would not have said at any other time, and which he would not repeat to her.

The morning passed in quiet talk between herself and her mother, and in indolent reveries. At about three o'clock in the afternoon, there was a ring at the bell. One of the work-women opened the door, and came in to say that a lady was there to inquire for Mademoiselle; should she come in? Her carriage was at the door.

"Show her in," said the mother.

The rustle of silk skirts was heard over the floor of the salon, and Nana, simply dressed in black silk, hurried in and went at once up to the bed, and as she took the young girl's hand in both of hers, she exclaimed:

"I have been thinking much of you. This accident has upset me terribly, but I am very thankful for your preservation."

Then, turning to Madame Naviel, she said:

"I need a quantity of roses to fill two Japanese jardinières with, which a friend has just presented me. In a week, I give a concert at my hôtel, followed by a ball. I should like my roses for that occasion. Can you give them to me?"

"We can go to work on them at once, Madame. What kind do you prefer?"

"Tea roses, *Solfaterres*, some *Gloire de Dijon*, *Malmaison*, and also some Bengal roses. A good many of the last, if you please; I adore their simplicity. They have a hearty look that enchants me. I hope Mademoiselle will herself come and arrange them in my jardinières, and I give you fair warning that I shall keep her that day to dine with me."

"I shall be most happy to do so, Madame," answered Andrée, "for by that time I shall certainly be able to walk."

"Write to me, Mademoiselle, at what hour the roses will be ready, or send me word by one of your workwomen, and my coupé shall come for you. Are you suffering at all?"

"The swelling has gone down, and the pain is much less," said Andrée.

"Poor little girl, you must have received a kick from one of those miserable animals. I nearly broke my own neck, although I carefully watched my chance to jump. Show me your foot!"

Andrée put her little foot out of the bed.

"Have you sent for a physician?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Your ankle is much swollen; perhaps some ligament is broken. Be very careful of it. Does it hurt when I touch it?"

"Yes, Madame."

"What a lovely complexion you have, and what exquisite hands. You would be a most formidable rival. Ah! the young man I saw yesterday is a lucky fellow. He is much better looking than Mulhausen. I wish for your sake that he had more money. He is a clerk, I presume."

"Yes, Madame."

"I once had an admirer years ago who was a clerk. He was tall and slender, and as fair as yourself. He interested and amused me very much. Why, I don't know; I was very young then."

As she talked, she examined a box of yellow roses. She placed one in her hair, and went to the mirror to see the effect. Then, returning to the bed, she placed the same rose on Andrée's head.

"It is astonishing," she said, "how much we resemble each other. The shade of your hair is exactly the same as mine, our eyes have the same greenish hue, and I have like yourself the same little yellow specks in the iris. If you were not this lady's daughter, I should claim you as mine."

"You are too young to have a daughter as old as I," answered Andrée, in all sincerity.

"It certainly would not be to my advantage, my dear, to take you about with me as my own child. I should prefer to call you my sister. At all events, you are very charming, and if I were a man I should fall head over ears in love with you. *Au revoir, ma belle.* Remember my orders, and take care of yourself. Adieu, Madame."

She went out in a perfectly natural manner, not thinking of the effect she produced, like the generality of persons of her class, who when they are playing the *grande dame* drop their eyes to see their black skirts, which fall in graceful folds on the carpet, rustling over it like dead leaves.

As she went down the stairs she said to herself:

"If this little Andrée were——I must know—I will know!"

CHAPTER XVI.

NANA'S BOUDOIR.

NANA'S Hôtel was crowded with workmen, the last preparations were being made for the fête she was about to give.

Four large salons on the side next the Park and two others on the opposite side of the house, connecting with folding doors, were beautifully decorated for the ball.

D'Albigny's library was transformed into a smoking-room and the billiard-room into a card-room. The orchestra was placed in the gallery.

In the early morning of the previous day Nana sent her coupé to Batignolles for Mademoiselle Naviel. The roses were all finished, and Andrée was dressing to take the order home when she was informed that Nana's coupé awaited her.

Since her accident the girl had grown thin, and she limped a little. Her mother did her best to keep her quiet and with her foot up in a chair, but it was impossible for Andrée to look on and see her mother perform the thousand little duties which usually fell to her share.

Madame Despretz had made a formal demand for the hand of the girl for her son the day after the accident. The Naviels expressed their pleasure frankly, and the marriage was decided upon, although the day was not fixed. Lucien came every morning to see Andrée before it was time for him to begin his daily work, and appeared again in the evening, generally dining with his future father-in-law, seated at the table next Andrée.

The morning of the day when Andrée was to carry the flowers to Nana, he came as usual, and waited until she was ready.

Never had Andrée looked lovelier. She wore the

same lilac dress she had worn at the Bouffes, and, as then, long gloves of the same tint. Both she and Lucien were naturally reminded of the white roses he had sent her on that occasion.

Andrée had never forgotten those penciled words and the advice concealed among the flowers.

When he placed her in the coupé, Lucien said uneasily:

"I hope you will not stay long with that woman."

"No longer than I can help," she answered; "but a customer like that is of considerable importance to us, and if, as she hinted, she expects me to arrange the jardinières, it will take me all the morning. It is even possible she may insist on my breakfasting with her. She said something of the kind the day she was here."

He went away a little sadly. Andrée, however, was in the best of spirits.

She was very impressionable, and enjoyed the little excitement of the day. She was almost well again, and looking forward to sharing the existence of the only man she had ever loved. Her future, therefore, looked to her serene and hopeful.

The roses she had made for Nana were wonderfully true to nature. A fête like that which this woman was about to give would make every artist who had contributed to it more or less conspicuous, and, notwithstanding her timidity, Andrée felt a feminine curiosity in penetrating the Hôtel of a woman who was so celebrated, and about whom all the luxuries of the world were gathered, and who swallowed up the revenues of a kingdom.

She with difficulty found room for herself in this coupé lined with blue satin, so full was it of the flowers which she and her mother had made during the week.

Nana had just finished her bath when Andrèe arrived.

Virginie, the maid, took the girl at once to the bath-room, the floor of which was of black and white marble. Nana was hastily attiring herself when they entered.

Virginie rubbed the little feet of her mistress and put on the tiny slippers.

"Make haste, my girl," said Nana, "I am crazy to see my roses. I am sorry to keep you waiting, Mademoiselle, but I will be ready in five minutes."

When she was enveloped in a long peignoir of satin de chine, which she wore with the utmost grace, she took Andrée by the hand and went to see the roses, which the coachman had heaped carelessly at the foot of the stairs.

Nana thought them charming.

"You must teach me to make flowers, Mademoiselle, it would amuse me to know how to do anything," said Nana. "I can sing, to be sure, and I have a good voice. I could go on the stage, but I do not need money, you know. A woman like myself, a daughter of the people having become a social power, renders many services to the poorer classes. The money we put in circulation goes continually into the pockets of the working people. What would Paris be without us? What would become of the mechanics? — of the artists?"

She uttered a laugh which echoed through the high corridors.

"Will you come with me, Mademoiselle?" she said. "While Virginie dresses me for breakfast we will talk together, if you please."

"I am at your orders, Madame," answered Andrée.

Together they ascended the wide, low stairs of rose-colored marble, and entered the boudoir, where Virginie was waiting to dress Madame's hair. As they walked, Nana's slippers made a little clicking sound.

When she was dressed, she said again to Andrée:

"Will you come, dear, and give me some lessons in flower-making? I will pay you whatever sum you ask. The question of price is of no consequence whatever. You please me very much. I wish I had a daughter like yourself; it seems to me that I should love her. I love nothing now, and am weary of everything. I would bequeath her my fortune. You are very lovely, my dear, and, I am sorry to say, very stupid, to live as

you do, marring the beauty of those dainty fingers, and stooping over your work—your shoulders will become rounded and you will grow ugly. In a few years you will grow old. But tell me, my dear, how many hours in the day do you work?"

"Twelve in the good season, Madame."

"Twelve hours! And you call that a good season when you have to work twelve hours out of the twenty-four? Poor child! You will lose your eye-sight too, in that way. What do you make by your labor?"

"My mother and myself make between us fifteen, sometimes twenty francs—"

"An hour, you mean?"

"No, Madame, a day, and we consider ourselves highly favored. There are women who make only thirty sous."

"Only thirty sous a day! Well! my dear, I never work, but I have all the money I want, and I think you must admit that toiling women are foolish ones!"

"No, Madame," said Andrée, "they are happier than you."

"Do you really think so? How can they be happy when they work hard and make nothing?"

"Ah, Madame, do you count it nothing that the man we love has confidence in us, respects as well as loves us, and the tender kiss he gives us, when he comes home weary from his work, pays us better for our own labors than all the jewels in the world."

"You are right, Mademoiselle. Our paths are very different. Nevertheless I cannot but feel regret when I see a pearl like yourself in such a common setting. If you had toilettes, diamonds, horses and a hôtel, all Paris would be at your feet. You would have your claqueurs, your chroniclers, your painters, photographers, and sculptors — even the money of the country would be stamped with your head, my little Queen! I am quite in earnest, child, in what I say."

"I prefer to be loved by the man I love, than to see at my feet an adoring crowd. All these costly follies of which you speak do not tempt me."

"But if you were dressed as you deserve to be, the man whom you love would find you much prettier, and would adore you still more. Look here, now, I will let you judge for yourself of the effect you would produce. Virginie, bring that dress I wore at the Review. This young lady's figure and mine are so much alike that my robe will fit her like a glove; bring too, that lace skirt, and the silk stockings which match the dress.

Virginie obeyed, and was desirous of dressing Andrée herself, but Nana said:

"No, no, go away, I want to do it—I am sure you would worry her with your manners—"

"Permit me to observe, Madame," said Virginie, in a much injured tone, "that my manners are all they should be; but, of course, if Madame wishes to play with Mademoiselle as if she were a new doll, I can go away, I am not jealous."

Having thrown this Parthian dart, Virginie departed.

Then, with passionate tenderness, Nana folded the girl in her arms, and kissed her over and over again.

Andrée, carried away by the coquettish desire to see her beauty in new adornments, allowed Nana to do what she chose, the elder woman stopping from time to time to admire and kiss the girl.

Suddenly the *portière* of the boudoir was lifted and d'Albigny, with a smile on his lips which showed his white teeth, with his head erect, his heavy black moustache and strong white hands, entered the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANDRÉE SPEAKS.

ANDRÉE rose to retire.

When he beheld her, d'Albigny stood motionless, as if struck by admiration.

"Well! what do you think of her, Marquis?" asked Nana.

"I think she is simply adorable!"

And going up to Nana he kissed her hand.

"I thank you," he said, "for having arranged this little surprise for me."

"I did not do it quite intentionally, Marquis," answered Nana in a low voice, "but still I am glad you have had the opportunity of seeing her."

D'Albigny went toward Andrée, and holding her slender fingers in his strong hand, he said:

"I am sincerely glad, Mademoiselle, that you are no longer suffering from the accident which was so nearly fatal to some of us, and I am tempted to bless this adventure, since it has procured us the pleasure of seeing you here. You are adorable in this costume, and I may say without flattery that the resemblance to Madame is startling, and she, you know, is recognized as the most beautiful woman in Paris. You are very young. How old are you?"

"Nineteen, sir."

"And your daughter, Nana, would be the same age."

"Would that this girl were she. I should adore her. I should triumph in her triumphs, and she should have all that money can procure. This child has much to learn, Marquis."

"Madame is right. You have everything to learn, Mademoiselle. You will, if you remain as you are, end by marrying some petty employé.

"You are very good," answered Andrée, with gentle

sarcasm. "I fear, however, that I am condemned to spend my life amid my present surroundings. I love my family, and am on the point of marrying—"

"That tall young fellow we saw with you, I presume. He is not ugly, but he dresses himself in the most deplorable fashion, and my experience has taught me that a man who dresses badly never succeeds in anything. Now I, for example, have spent a great deal of money, I am deeply in debt—I live, I eat, I play, and do what I please, merely because I know how to walk and to dress, and because I understand the world as few men do—"

A lackey now knocked at the door and said:

"Madame, breakfast is served."

Andrée started. This voice was not unknown to her; she recognized it as well as the speaker.

"Come my child," said Nana, "keep on that dress, it fits you wonderfully well, and is very becoming. We will breakfast together, we three. Give me your arm, d'Albigny."

The Marquis obeyed, and they took their way to the dining-room.

Andrée was very uncomfortable, for she did not like the manner of the Marquis nor his words, nor was she pleased with the caresses of this woman, nor with her sophistry. She felt as a person might feel who is carried to some strange planet, and who has literally nothing in common with the people he encounters.

It seemed to her that she was unable to reason any more; her conscience reproached her for listening to what was said. And all the time, as she sat listening to the Marquis, she went over and over the arguments she had used to defend the choice she had made of a life of domestic happiness and toil.

She was conscious that all this magnificence gratified her, that the flattery of this woman pleased her, and that she herself felt a secret pride in calling the attention of these two to the sacrifice they believed her to have made.

The voice of the man, the lackey whom she had

known as a clown and a police officer, had awakened her from her wretched dreams. Why had she been weak enough to allow this woman to make a plaything of her and dress her like a doll?

She passed through the *portière* which the tall lackey held aside.

He murmured in her ear:

"Do not look as if you recognized me, Mademoiselle. I am not known here. They call me Luke now."

And with the most correct bearing, his face carefully shaven and his hair well trimmed, looking perfectly respectable in his black coat, he entered the dining-room behind her.

It was an octagonal room, paved with Florentine mosaic — not very large, but in perfect proportion. From the dome-like ceiling hung a massive silver lamp which represented eight Cupids, with their wings spread, rolling a globe with their feet, and each Cupid brandishing a torch with three branches. A large double door communicated with the suite of rooms used for entertaining. Three long windows opened on a semi-circular balcony built around an octagon tower, which occupied one angle of the hôtel, and looked out upon a most beautiful view.

Four mirrors were set in panels opposite each other. The table was round, the service in Sévres and in Baccarat crystal with a coronet, and Nana's initial engraven upon it in raised letters of gold.

D'Albigny sat next Andrée, and Nana opposite both. Luke stood behind his mistress.

"Would you believe, Marquis," said Nana abruptly, "that there are women who live on thirty sous a day?"

"No, *chérie*. I would not believe it, for admitting that these poor creatures would like to do so, they can't; it is an absolute impossibility. Mademoiselle, you agree with me, of course?"

"No, sir, for I have proof to the contrary. I have a new work-woman, an orphan, to whom I give no more."

"She has other means, then?" said Nana.

"No, Madame."

"How on earth does she manage it?"

"Her food costs her fifteen sous daily, her room ten francs a month; she never drinks wine, lives without a fire, washes her own linen, and makes all she wears."

"There are some existences which it is impossible to understand. Better never to have been born than live like that!"

"Poverty comes to the rich sometimes, Madame, and often when least expected. The terrible thing is to be reduced to poverty after living in luxury."

"You look, Mademoiselle, as if this fate might eventually be mine, but that is quite impossible. Is not that so, d'Albigny?"

"Yes, Madame. As long as you are Nana so long I shall be d'Albigny. Together we have nothing to fear, and so much the worse for the others."

After breakfast, Nana rose to go and see her flowers.

"Luke, come with me," she said. "You will carry my roses to the gallery, where I will arrange them by and by with Mademoiselle. Wait for me here," she said to Andrée, "I will be back in a moment."

The Marquis was left alone with the young girl. He went to her, and with an air of courteous kindness took her hand.

"Would you like Nana to adopt you—to take you to live with her, and make you her heiress?" he said, without the smallest preamble.

"Thanks, sir; I prefer to work."

"But you are unreasonable. It is impossible that you should prefer the life of a slave to the existence you would lead here."

"I cannot renounce my family or my fiancé."

"You need not renounce your family. On the contrary, you will have it in your power to be very useful to them. As to your fiancé, you could marry him if he has a ray of sense. Otherwise it becomes our duty, having your interest at heart, to insist on your giving up this youth. Others will love you. You will be understood as you deserve to be. Now,

if you permit me to manage your affairs, I will make you enormously rich."

"Your words are insults, sir!" cried Andrée, her eyes flashing with anger and her cheeks red with indignation.

She said this in a voice which shook with emotion, and she rose hastily from her chair with a nervous dread that she had fallen into a trap. Where was Nana? Why had she left her alone with this man whom she began to loathe?

The young girl knew nothing of his history or of the manner in which he lived in that house. She was thinking of Paillardin, and asked herself if the world was full of such men, and her soul swelled with contempt.

"I give you my word," the Marquis replied, "that I intend no insult. I assure you no one in this house shall ever be guilty of the smallest impertinence toward you."

"I have misunderstood you, then. I ask your pardon, sir."

"Ah! *petite*, your irony is very keen — but never mind! I am inclined to believe that it is wiser to permit you to cherish your fancy for this young man. Marry him, *ma belle!* marry him by all means. Go find Madame, put on your simple costume, and arrange your roses. Go, Mademoiselle, I would not detain you."

He smiled with disdainful pity.

Andrée did not reply, but left the dining-room instantly. She met Nana in the corridor, and said to her:

"I regret, Madame, that I cannot remain any longer in your house, for my work calls me home."

"The Marquis has been talking to you, I fancy, my dear, but there was no need of getting angry with him. At heart he is a very good fellow, only you ought never to contradict him. Luke," she continued, "show Mademoiselle the way to my room, where she can change her dress."

As soon as the man was out of hearing of his mistress he said to Andrée:

"You know me, I see, and now listen to what I say. Never—no, never, come to this house again. I have come to the surface, as you see, once more, and I value my life again. I have been placed here to prevent a little of the thieving which goes on all the time in this house, and I keep my eyes open night and day. My ears, too, are pretty big. You remember how Hercules used to pull them years ago? Well! all that is said here tumbles into them. If you knew how I had learned to hate in these eight years of misery! I have grown as wicked as everybody else. I have no interest in any human being except in you and your father, who did me a very bad service when he pulled me out of the water. Now I have but one aim in life, and a terrible one. I have attached myself to this house, to this woman, to this Marquis, in order to ruin them as they have ruined me. I will knock the supports from under the monument they have built up of their opulence. I will show them as they are. I am somebody now—I have the whole police force at my back. I am no longer a clown, I am no longer a beggar. I am no longer he whom you saw arresting women in the street, I am now in a safe position. I leave you to dress, now, Mademoiselle, and pray heed my words, do not come here again."

He walked away, muttering to himself.

Virginie now appeared.

"I am sent to assist you, Mademoiselle," she said respectfully.

"I regret that Madame should have disturbed you," answered Andrée, "I am quite accustomed to waiting on myself."

She changed her dress hastily, and in ten minutes was in the street, feeling intense relief as she breathed the pure air and saw the sunshine and busy people moving about.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MABILLE.

ALL that evening the workmen were still busy in Nana's hôtel, and she, to escape from the confusion, insisted on d'Albigny going with her to Mabille.

The garden was lighted when she entered, flowers of flame bloomed among the branches and luminous fruit hung from the trees. The cascade and grotto were mysteriously illuminated.

About eleven o'clock Nana's entrance made a sensation. She wore a robe of black velvet with a long train, a mousquetaire hat of black felt, ornamented with a blue feather; her jewels were sapphires, mounted in silver.

When she reached the Arcade — Luke was behind her in full livery, and she was leaning on d'Albigny's arm — dancing had begun, and a crowd gathered to look at the dancers, who were as serious as if they had been official personages fulfilling some important function. There was only one man, a little fellow, who amused the gallery with his fantastic gestures and impossible attitudes. The women amused the Englishmen present by their odd manner of dancing. The ladies who had accompanied these foreigners looked on the contrary, greatly distressed.

An attentive circle of habitués looked on with a slightly bored expression, while a number of provincials, who occupied front seats with their wives, seemed to feel the most absolute consternation.

When Nana entered it was almost as if she had been announced by some one of the policemen with silver badges glittering on their breasts. Her name ran from tongue to tongue. Her silent admirers drew back to permit her to pass. She seated herself with the

Marquis near the *grande salle*, where on rainy evenings the dancing took place.

Luke stood behind her chair, erect and silent.

"My dear," said d'Albigny, in reply to a question which Nana asked, "I will tell you all I discovered in regard to the matter in which you are so interested. I obtained my information at the *Hospice des Enfants-Assistés*. I made use of the powerful influence of a friend at court, and discovered through it that which is never revealed. I learned what had become of your daughter, and—mark how truly your instincts guided you — this young Andrée, who was saluted at the Bouffes as Nana's daughter — this little florist, who resembles you as an eglantine resembles a rose — well! this girl is your own child. She is only the adopted daughter of the good people who have brought her up, and when she knows that you are her mother she will surely come to you. There are hereditary fatalities, and this child must have inherited something of your temperament, something of your fire!"

"The associations in which she has been brought up have possibly extinguished the fire of which you speak. Ashes have been thrown on the living coals, and it is too late— "

"It is not too late for you to claim her, Nana, and these good people, who consider her, of course, as a sacred charge, will not refuse to surrender the treasure when they know that you are her mother, and that you can prove it."

"The girl is adorable! I shall go crazy over her! and I shall probably become jealous of every person who speaks to her."

"Then you had much better leave her where she is, for the day, Nana, that you begin to indulge in the virtues of the *bourgeoisie*, you will begin to grow old. I speak to you as a friend, plainly and without flattery. I say things which no other among your admirers would venture to say, but that many would think. They are all afraid of you; but they would turn their backs upon you, were you to lose your

sceptre, while to-day they adore the very ground you tread upon. I know more of life than you do, and if it is in penitence that you assume your motherhood, if you have no practical aim in taking this girl home, then all I have to say is, that you had best remain Nana to the end. But to return to Andrée. I am greatly mistaken if, when she knows you are her mother, she resists your entreaties. You must not forget the rôle you are to play, Nana—tenderness, maternal affection, and all that sort of thing. A few tears would not be amiss, if it should come to pass that your daughter refuses to follow you; but you are to stand firm, and when she is softened, take her away instantly! I will manage the rest. But above all things, Nana, summon up a few tears; you are absolutely irresistible when you weep. I have often seen you employ this heroic means to soften the hearts of certain monsters who wished to compel you to pay your debts. I remember that I, even I, d'Albigny, was once taken in!"

"I am afraid her fiancé will be troublesome — the child has a hankering after the conjugal yoke."

"That makes no difference, Nana — we can manage the husband. The world will think all the better of you, for marrying your daughter."

"I do wish, d'Albigny, that you would not use such unpleasantly plain language. Suppose you should be overheard?"

"I should be looked upon as very sensible, and be respected accordingly. Look! there is Mulhausen, who sees us, and is coming to pay his respects."

Mulhausen, in fact, was seen making his way through the crowd, conspicuous in light gloves, his head very erect, his face very red, and his whiskers more faded than ever.

He had adopted, in order to give himself a knowing air, eye-glasses set in gold, and sucked the tortoise-shell ball on the top of his cane perpetually.

"How are you, dear Prince?" said the Marquis. "Have you quite recovered from the shock?"

"And you, Marquis?"

"My dear Mulhausen," Nana exclaimed, "d'Albigny is not a man to be greatly moved. As to myself, I am not yet consoled for the accident. My two colored postilions are dead, and my three horses. I have one remaining which, by the way, I offer you."

"Thanks, fair lady. Prussia asks my services, and your Parisian coachmen cannot drive. Since that day, I have renewed my stable, men and horses. They all came from Germany. I intend them to appear to-morrow, in honor of your fête. By the way, have you written to Stog yet?"

"Only an hour ago," answered d'Albigny. "Madame sent me a letter which she wished me to copy, and I did so."

The Marquis took a paper from his pocket-book and handed it to the Prince. Mulhausen arranged his glasses, and read in a low voice the following letter:

"'If Monsieur Stog does not come as he promised, I shall believe that he is actuated either by fear of d'Albigny or myself. I certify that the Marquis has never given Monsieur Stog the smallest pretext for withdrawing.'"

This letter was signed by Nana.

"He is quite foolish enough to come," said the Prince.

"I shall always regret this man," said Nana, with a sigh. "His *brusque* frankness pleased me; but he detested d'Albigny, and d'Albigny is too true a friend to be sacrificed to any one else."

"You are quite right, Nana," exclaimed the German, "and, in fact, had not d'Albigny disembarrassed you of him, I would have been only too glad to perform the little service for you."

"If you like, I will yield the honor to you," said d'Albigny, sarcastically.

"No, you can't do that," answered the German, "for it was you he insulted. If it had been me, I should not have waited a week to ask why."

"Do you propose to give me a lesson, Prince?"

"I give you a lesson! By no means. You do not need one, Marquis."

"Upon my word," exclaimed Nana, "it strikes me, my dear Mulhausen, that it is not best for you to constitute yourself an authority in matters of this kind, for you have not the requisite *cachet*."

The German gnawed his moustache in silent rage. At this moment, a lackey in a blue livery was seen making his way through the crowd.

"Ah! there comes the reply from Stog," said d'Albigny, and turning toward the tall lackey, with the impassive face, who stood behind Nana, he said:

"Luke, go tell him where we are."

Luke went away and soon returned with the other. Nana took the letter he brought and read aloud:

"'I have the honor of accepting your invitation, Madame, and will present to you two of my friends.

"'STOG.'"

"Good!" said Mulhausen, in his strong German accent.

The orchestra was playing a mazourka, and the crowd watched the dancers, who were always the same.

The women half lay in the arms of their partners, with their heads on their shoulders. The men danced with their knees bent and their hats on the back of their heads, looking like *satyrs* in coats.

And all around the circle, women in conspicuous costumes wandered about, seeking to make acquaintances, asking for a glass of wine from two classes, the very young men or the very old, these two being the most lavish of money.

There was one old gentleman, short and stout, with white hair and a dyed moustache, whom they all seemed to know; but he paid little attention to anything they said.

Meanwhile, under the gallery and along the arcade,

brilliant members of Nana's world sat looking on, with a smile of derisive pity.

"Come!" said Nana, "this is stupid." She rose as she spoke.

The Marquis yielded her arm to the Prince, as he wished to speak to a friend.

"To-morrow night, then?" asked the friend.

"Probably," d'Albigny replied.

"I am at your disposal, my dear Marquis."

"I rely on you."

"And with reason. Who is your other second?"

"The Prince de Mulhausen."

The two men separated after a cordial pressure of the hand, and d'Albigny hastened after the couple who by this time were nearly at the door, followed by the two lackeys in blue.

Luke was as stolid as ever; but in his eyes there was a strange expression, quite new to them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FATE OF THE GORILLA.

TWENTY years before, Luke had been for three brief months, Nana's admirer. He was then very young, and she, to her knowledge, had never seen him since.

He had committed a crime in borrowing ten thousand francs from the amount confided to his care. Nana had refused to take this money in payment for her child, and had the man arrested, just when he was about to restore the money.

At his trial, he had shown so clearly that he had been on his way to return the money, that the Court did not condemn him.

Penitent and ashamed of his fault, he dared not attempt to obtain a situation where he was likely to be recognized by former acquaintances. When released from prison, he was without one penny. He gradually slipped into a life of expedients — living from hand to mouth, and never knowing where his dinner was coming from the next day.

In spite, however, of his debasement, he felt a keen regret for his past respectability, and a strong wish to find a place in the world once more.

Therefore, when he thought of all he had lost, of the woman who had betrayed him, who had robbed him of his honor and of his child, he felt himself shaken from head to foot with a gust of passion, in which jealousy, regret, and hatred each had a share.

He would have given his life to embrace his child once, and for a long time had been attracted by every little girl he happened to see. Andrée struck his fancy, especially the day he saw her at Saint Cloud.

Nana, too, he saw that day, but she had not recognized him.

After this, *Face-à-Claques* gave up his profession as a clown, and became miserably poor. This life of privations aged him to that degree that he was totally irrecognizable.

One day, weary of life, he attempted suicide, and was saved by Pierre Naviel. After this, he had not the courage to make another attempt.

He entered the *police-des-mœurs*, where he made himself useful. He ate and drank as much as he wanted. He became actually the confidant, and the tyrant of outcast women, and felt a bitter joy in avenging his own wrong on them. He performed his duties with a fierce zeal that recommended him to the favor of the Préfecture.

He never loved any other woman but Nana, and no one had power to drive her memory from his heart.

Three days after the Review, when Nana had seen him clothed in a little brief authority, he was called to another position; an unlooked for chance presented itself. The Government wished to establish a surveillance over Nana's hôtel, where persons high in political life paid their court, where rich strangers constantly appeared, where the Postmaster General was to be seen, where the Prince de Mulhausen made himself conspicuous, where certain Jesuits went in and out with stealthy footfall, and where there was a constant sound of the jingle of gold.

The Government wished to know the truth about d'Albigny, and to make all these discoveries and investigations, a man was required whose eyes and ears could be depended upon.

Nana's old admirer asked to be put on this duty, and obtained the consent of the officials.

Just at this time, Nana was looking for two lackeys to replace those who had died. The man from the police office applied, and was not recognized.

He had suffered excessively the last twenty years, had grown even thinner, and was frightfully wrinkled. He offered the best of references, and was at once received.

But in a few days, his former admiration for Nana awakened. The continual sight of this woman, who had lost none of her fascinations—who had gained new ones in fact—whose intellect and wit had developed, and whose manners were very different from what they had been at twenty, disturbed the hard-won equanimity of the former clown.

A painful shock was his, when he heard at Mabille, from d'Albigny's words addressed to Nana, the ties that united Andrée and herself. He felt sure that Andrée was his daughter, and also that a detestable plot was being organized against the peace of this young girl, who had been educated to love honest toil.

Then a frightful contest began within him, between his old love for the mother, and the new-born tenderness for the child.

Nana appeared again in his life, as the fatality that lured him to destruction. The mad idea entered his head of going to her room in the night and killing her, and thus saving his little Andrée from the toils of a man like d'Albigny, and the influence of her mother.

It was this half-formed intention that imparted the tragic look to his eyes when he left Mabille, walking stiffly by the side of the other lackey.

The moon had risen. Its silvery light inundated the hues of the *Champs Elysées*. A few white clouds floated like plumes over the blue expanse. The heat was intense, and the delicate tips of the branches of the trees hung limp, under the weight of white dust with which they were covered.

On reaching Nana's hôtel, Luke, whose duties were now over for the night, took refuge in his attic-room; from the window, which was in the slope of the roof, he could see those of Nana, whose chamber was situated precisely in the middle of the body of the house, while his attic was in a projecting wing.

Often in the evening, after extinguishing his light, he opened the shutter of his round window, and watched Nana's shadow on the silk curtains.

On the night of which we write, he was possessed by

a mad fever of jealousy, when, on looking down, he saw another shadow than Nana's on the curtain.

For twenty years, in all the chances and changes of his career, in his prison days, and in his poverty, he had been able to keep the little dagger with its onyx handle — the same which he had once lifted to do this woman mortal harm — and always wore it about his neck fastened by a ribbon.

The windows of Nana's room were open on account of the heat. The light breeze occasionally lifted the curtain, and he could see that it was Virginie, who was with her mistress, and not a visitor as he had supposed. Finally, with her dressing gown loosely wrapped around her, Nana went to the window and leaned out, and then going back the lights were lowered.

Luke waited until the house was still, and then, taking off his boots, crept down a long, dark corridor which led to the servants' staircase, and, when he had gone down two flights, he went into the body of the house, through another passage which led into an anteroom of Nana's private apartment, here he concealed himself behind a *portière* that fell to the ground. Virginie, when she left her mistress, locked a double door which opened on the principal staircase.

Luke had hardly entered when Virginie came out. The heat was so extraordinary that she set these doors wide open; in doing this she passed close to Luke, and in fact touched the ample folds of the old Aubusson tapestry by which he was concealed. Then he heard her pass down the corridor and knew that he was at last alone — in the same place where, twenty years before, he had implored Nana to give him back his child, and where she had refused to follow him and lead a life of honest toil.

He could see from where he stood the corner of Nana's bed, and the huge silver eagle, watching with outspread wings over her slumbers, was bathed in the soft light of an Eastern lamp. Nana, was oppressed by the heat — her hands were clasped above her head, and her whole attitude was one of inimitable grace.

Luke grasped the dagger tightly in his hands and crept toward the bed. He hesitated, struck by her beauty; he intended to kill her and then himself.

He raised the dagger—suddenly a hairy hand seized the wrist of the murderer with such vigor that the helpless fingers loosened their grasp on the dagger, which dropped on the carpet. Another hand was laid on the shoulder of the lackey so heavily that he sank on his knees.

These hands, or paws, were those of Yorick, a pet gorilla belonging to Nana, who kept the creature in her room to act, she said, as a watch-dog. The animal's instinct had taught him that his mistress was in danger, and he had come to her assistance.

When Luke was forced by the gorilla down upon his knees, he was just the height of the creature. He caught the dagger from the floor and struck the animal full in the heart, burying the blade up to the handle.

The beast uttered a cry of agony and fell back. Nana awoke with a start, and saw that her poor Yorick was dying. Luke himself had disappeared—she did not see him. As she leaped from the bed and ran to the assistance of Yorick, she saw the dagger still sticking in his breast, and had a vague recollection of having seen it before and even of having given it to some one. But to whom? She could not remember.

Some unknown enemy, some former admirer who had been dismissed, had succeeded in making his way into her room when she was asleep.

She lighted a candle and summoned the Marquis.

CHAPTER XX.

NANA'S FÊTE.

IT was ten o'clock, and the first carriages were driving up to the door of the hôtel, and the salons were beginning to fill. Supper was served in the conservatory. Six lackeys in blue and silver liveries stood by the tables, while four more took the men's overcoats and the wraps of the ladies.

Luke stood on the lower step of the marble stairs, and distributed the following programme:

PROGRAMME

Of the Concert given on June 30th, 187—.

Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée, proverbe de Musset, joué par deux artistes de la Comédie-Française.....A. De Musset
Valse de *Mireille*, chantée par Mme. X— de l'Opéra-Comique.....Gounod
Sérénade de Schubert, jouée sur le violon par M. R.—violon-solo de S. M. le roi de Portugal.....Schubert
Polonaise de Chopin, jouée par M. N—, pianiste de S. M. l'Empereur de Russie. Chopin
Air de la *Timballe*, chanté par Mme Judic. Vasseur
Duo du *Pré-aux-Clercs*, par Mme. X.—de l'Opéra-Comique, et M. Z.—du Théâtre Lyrique..... .....Herold
Rêverie de Schumann, pour violon.....Schumann
Septuor de Beethoven, par tous les instruments à cordes de l'orchestre.....Beethoven
Le piano sera tenu par M. Y.—

The concert commenced at eleven. The four salons were by that time crowded with black coats starred

with decorations. The men predominated, the women being mainly artists from the various theatres, or stars in the world of gallantry who were led by curiosity to see the interior of a Hôtel of which all the world were talking, and by the desire to make acquaintance with the journalists, artists and caricaturists who were sure to be there in quest of subjects for their pens and pencils.

The Marquis d'Albigny stood in the first salon with Nana to receive the guests. The concert was held in the further room, which was reached either through the three salons or by the gallery. The Park, in which all the palms and orange trees and exotics from the conservatories had been arranged, was lighted by electricity. Marble statues gleamed against the green background, seats were arranged in shaded corners for the benefit of the romantic.

The play and the concert were an immense success, and when the programme was finished the mistress of the house was entreated to sing. Nana never sang in public, although her voice was magnificent and well cultivated. Occasionally, at one of her supper parties, or after a dinner in her own house, she consented to oblige her friends.

The Prince de Mulhausen pleaded on this occasion with true German obstinacy, but failed completely. She answered:

"I cannot grant you, my dear Prince, that which I have refused to my countrymen; the journals would abuse me frightfully were I to dream of such a thing."

She made this reply in a tone that was far less amiable than she usually employed when she entertained, for on these occasions Nana laid aside her abrupt haughtiness, was politeness itself, and treated her most unimportant guests with the greatest suavity.

But this evening she was not quite herself; her nerves were unstrung by the occurrences of the previous night, and by the death of poor Yorick, her mute slave, struck through the heart by the dagger with the onyx handle, a relic of the Past which now returned

to her as a threat for the Future. She was also expecting the arrival of Stog, and was affected by a vague, superstitious fear which was new to her.

Presently she heard the announcement: "Monsieur Stog, Postmaster General—"

Then followed two names unknown in the hôtel, names of the two friends whom he had proposed to present to Nana.

A shiver of anticipation ran around the salon—the story of the previous night was whispered behind the fans of the ladies.

It was said that Stog had conceived for Nana a mad admiration, that he wished to kill d'Albigny and all other men who approached her, and that he had come to this entertainment merely to make a scene.

Certain words that had been overheard between the Marquis and the Prince de Mulhausen at Mabille had given grounds to these reports.

Stog went directly up to Nana. His expression was severe. His eyes were peculiarly bright, and there was a tinge of red high up on his cheeks. His white hair glittered in the light of the chandeliers.

"I understand," he said to Nana, "that you refuse to sing, that is to say you refuse to enchant us. If you persist in saying no, I shall think *you are afraid of me.*"

These words contained a threat which Nana understood. She rose, saying as she did so:

"To disabuse you of this idea I will sing, contrary to my usual habit."

Stog offered his arm, which she accepted, and they passed through the four salons to the piano. The servants brought in chairs, and as soon as the guests who, were talking together in the corridors and in the salons, saw Nana going to the piano, there was a general "hush! hush!"

Nana pointed out to the pianist who was to accompany her the famous air in the fifth act of *L'Africaine*, and proceeded to interpret with wonderful skill this admirable page, written by the greatest genius of musical and dramatic art.

When she uttered the cry at the end, the cry of heart-rending despair, so unearthly and yet so human,

"Adieu, Vasco, mon bien-aimé, sois pardonné!"

an outburst of enthusiasm filled the four salons. The marvellous beauty of the woman was heightened by the emotion she felt. Lightning flashes lit the green depths of her eyes. Her tawny hair, rolled in rich masses in a knot at the back of her head, seemed to emit light and surround her like a halo.

She wore a diadem of marguerites composed of diamonds on flexible stems, which shook with every movement of her head. Her ear-rings were two marguerites like those of her diadem, and on her blue satin slippers bloomed two more, which attracted attention to the slenderness of her feet.

Her robe was of blue satin, cut very low and with an immense train, trimmed on the front breadth with twelve narrow ruffles of English point.

Around her throat was a triple row of superb pearls. Her success as a woman and as an artist was complete. Nothing was lacking, not even the criticisms of three literary women who had grown old in poverty, and who were jealous of this splendor, which humiliated them.

"She has not absolute control over the notes in her middle register," said one of them sententiously.

"A singer should always hold back her voice a little and not give out all she has," said the other.

"I am told," added a third, sharply, "that this woman never gives anything."

The three literary women laughed maliciously at this.

A rush to the supper table now took place, the men pushing with no little vigor and determination.

Luke was carving a pheasant at a side table. He was assailed by pleading voices and outstretched hungry hands. Finally Mulhausen succeeded in obtaining a wing of the bird. He took refuge in a corner as proud of his triumph as of a German victory.

Stog passed him.

"What have you done with *Monsieur* d'Albigny?" he asked.

"Did you come here to insult the Marquis?" said Mulhausen; "if you did, you will excuse me if I say that the moment is ill chosen."

"*Monsieur* d'Albigny cannot be insulted," answered Stog.

"You mean, I suppose, that no one would dare insult him," said d'Albigny, who had heard his name.

Stog's eyes flashed fire. He snatched the plate which Mulhausen held in his hand, and threw it in the face of the Marquis.

"Very good!" said d'Albigny coldly. "I ask nothing better now than to kill you!"

"As soon as you please. I have my two seconds here."

The Marquis pointed to the Prince.

"And here is one of mine," he said.

"And here is the other," added another voice.

The friend, to whom he had spoken the previous evening, now approached with his hat under his arm, and made a bow to the whole circle.

"Let us take two carriages and go to the *Bois*; it is moonlight."

"No," answered d'Albigny; "the *Salle d'Armes* is close at hand."

The other men nodded a consent, and they all left the hôtel.

While this fray was going on, Nana was at the other end of the gallery, giving instructions to the leader of the orchestra.

The crowd was so compact and the noise so great, that she heard nothing. In fact, those persons who were near the especial corner of the supper room where these men had stood, alone knew what had taken place.

The younger women who meant to dance were already seated in the further salon. Chairs were placed in double rows around the four rooms. For five minutes nothing was seen except black coats bending before white shoulders.

The ball began, and Nana was surrounded by men who implored the favor of a waltz.

"But I never dance," she said.

"No, and you never sing," said a young Englishman, laughing.

"I will make an exception in your favor, my Lord," Nana answered.

She laid her hand lightly on his shoulder, and the two were soon lost in the whirlpool of lace, silk, and diamonds.

After the waltz, the dancers hurried to the buffet, where they quaffed iced champagne from shallow glasses.

The Park was full of people. The women, with their trains thrown over their arms on account of the dampness of the grass, wandered about with their cavaliers. The fountain sparkled in the moonlight, for it was sheltered by tall willow trees from the artificial light, and from afar off rose the noise of the city, steady like the noise of the sea.

Nana was looking for d'Albigny, for she felt a little uneasy, though she did not believe that any serious altercation could take place between two men, one of whom was indispensable to her, and the other interesting her strangely.

She wanted to speak to d'Albigny and caution him to avoid a scene which might terminate in a tragedy.

"Where is Monsieur le Marquis?" she asked of Luke, whom she met in the hall.

"I think, Madame, I saw him go down the steps to the Park," was the man's reply.

"Go look for him; tell him that I must see him at once. I will wait here."

She took a seat in the balcony from which she could see the illuminated garden and grounds. The *coup d'œil* was magnificent. Her lips moved with a smile of pride as she contemplated this almost royal fête paid for by her. She felt that she controlled the taste of her generation, of an entire race. She was the favorite of a century, not of a brief epoch. Suddenly

her eyes fell on a lighted window in the extreme wing of the hôtel. This window was that of the *Salle d'Armes*. Shadows passed to and fro upon the curtains. It seemed to her that she saw the shadow of two colossal swords on the ceiling.

Then, suddenly, one of these swords passed the curtains in a straight black line, and struck a shadow which fell backward.

"The die is cast!" she murmured, as she rose.

Gay, laughing couples were coming up the double flight of steps leading from the Park. Long trains floated over the rose-colored marble. Shapely shoulders had all the whiteness of marble under the light which poured from the crystal chandelier. In the vestibule Nana met the Rajah whom she had ruined in a week. He had returned from Benares with a new fortune and new diamonds, drawn from Asia by the recollection of Nana. She took his arm, and, without any salutation, said simply:

"Come—I expected you—I was thinking of you."

She drew him into the card-room.

"You know, Prince," she added with a laugh, "you know that I often lose, but I never pay."

In his smile was the sadness of a fatalist as he murmured:

"I came back because your beauty called me, because your serpent eyes fascinated me, and because the women of my own land do not interest me. I came back that you might make me your slave."

He seated himself at a table opposite her. The room was hung with myrtle-green velvet. Men who were still young but almost all bald were seated before the different tables.

The clink of gold was the only noise in the room, for every voice spoke in whispers.

The joyous music from the ball room came faintly through the double doors.

Nana lost the first game.

"I play for your smiles to-night," said the Rajah.

"No—"

"And why?"

"Because they belong to some one else."

"And to whom?"

"To a man who loves me better than you do, Prince."

"That is impossible."

"It is true."

"Prove it. Where is he?"

"He is playing a more serious game than this, for my sake."

"And for what stakes?"

"His blood!"

"Very well. Will you stake your smiles against my life?"

Nana nodded as she dealt the cards.

The Prince cut and the game began.

Nana lost again.

The Rajah's eyes flashed with joy.

She laughed aloud.

"You know I warned you," she said.

"Warned me of what?" he asked, his lips turning white.

"That I never pay when I lose."

"Then I will pay for you. To-morrow, when the admirer whom you prefer leaves your house, I will kill him!"

She was a little moved by his energy, and became more acquiescent.

"No," she said, "I will pay, but it must be when I please. Shall I give you a note at sixty days?"

"You jest at everything," said the Rajah, leaving his chair and coming round to the side of the table where she sat.

Luke entered at this moment.

"Where is the Marquis?" asked Nana.

"I have not been able to find him, Madame, but I heard on the stairs that he and Monsieur Stog had fought a duel."

"Is he wounded?"

"He is dead, Madame."

"Dead!"

"If he had not died to-night, I should have killed him to-morrow," said the Rajah calmly."

"You!"

"Yes, I."

She seized the Rajah by the arm and shook him violently.

"I believe you killed Yorick!" she cried.

Luke became very white, but the Rajah, not understanding, made no reply.

Nana accepted this silence as a confession.

She thrust aside the table, and as she rushed toward the smoking-room, which led to the apartments of the Marquis, she exclaimed to the Eastern Prince:

"Never appear in my presence again!"

He rose and went out with the imperturbability of a martyr—his features as set as if they had been of bronze.

Luke was waiting for him at the head of the stairs, and at once accosted him.

"There is some one here who will serve you, Prince."

"And who is that? Yourself?"

"Yes!"

"Will you avenge me?"

"Yes, and myself at the same time."

"Very well! Take this poison for her, and this jewel for yourself."

He gave him a small capsule and a ring ornamented with a huge diamond.

"Keep the jewel, Prince; I only want the poison," said the lackey.

"I never take back what I have given," said the Indian, with Oriental sternness.

And throwing the diamond on the marble, he wrapped his mantle of white cashmere about him, and slowly descended the stairs.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DUEL IS FOUGHT.

NANA hurried to the chamber occupied by d'Albigny. As she reached it, the Aubusson *portière* was lifted, and the Marquis appeared.

"It is done!" he said.

"Stog is dead?" cried Nana.

"Probably—as you see me alive."

"So much the better."

"For me, at all events."

"For us both, Marquis. And Mulhausen, where is he?"

"Looking for you."

"Well, tell me what has taken place. Tell me everything."

"Willingly; only let us go back to the ball room. We should be seen there as soon as possible. Take my arm."

As this worthy pair entered, the gayety of the ball room was at its height. The women were very coquettish, being inspired by the magnificence around them; the men, a little dignified and reserved, responded to them with politeness. Several elderly women probably the mothers of the actresses present, sat on the sofas against the wall, talking together. Some of them were alarmingly stout, others wrinkled by age like parchment; some of them mute and serious, others merry and polite.

They looked at the women who were dancing—those graceful forms and dainty feet advancing and receding under those floating skirts were as a vision of their vanished youth. And all these mothers, stout or thin—all these ghosts of the Past reduced to the rôle of caryatides in ball rooms frequented by their daughters—experienced a personal joy, a singular sentiment

of triumph, when they beheld their daughters approached with timid respect by the young men who asked them to dance.

Nana went to the buffet, after passing through the four salons, with her arm still in that of d'Albigny.

As she ate an ice, she said to him:

"Now tell me the story of the duel."

"It is not a long one, Nana. Stog threw a plate in my face. This plate he snatched from Mulhausen, who, with true Germanic phlegm, went on eating the wing of a pheasant, while Stog and I exchanged some pretty fierce words. The whole affair was prearranged, we each had our seconds at hand, and we went at once to the *Salle d'Armes*. One of my adversary's seconds went for the swords, which were in his carriage, and we drew lots to decide whether mine or these should be used. Stog won the day. Mulhausen measured them; they were of equal length. We took our places—it is difficult for me to describe what took place. Stog was really wonderful; he showed great powers of endurance and strong wrists, but he was not in practice, for he had been too busy a man to spend many hours of the day in a *Salle d'Armes*. He lifted his arm too high, and I made a lunge. My thrust was fatal; his seconds caught him as he fell, I believe—I am not sure, however, for I instantly hurried away to reassure you."

Nana and d'Albigny entered the card room as soon as she had heard this story. The Prince de Mulhausen was still looking for Nana.

He was laughing loudly, and as Nana entered he was just saying:

"Germany has won a great victory to-night, thanks to d'Albigny. France counts a man less. Poor France! It is very unfortunate, for she has not many men like Stog."

As he spoke the German rubbed his much-ringed hands together.

When he saw Nana he went up to her, and, taking both her hands, kissed them, as he said in a low voice:

"I congratulate you, my dear, that you are relieved of a most inconvenient and troublesome admirer."

"Stog was never my admirer," answered Nana disdainfully.

"Of your Platonic adorer, then," answered the Prince. "Besides, if d'Albigny had not killed him, I was there, and—"

"Mulhausen has not yet digested his pheasant," interrupted d'Albigny.

"Stog and I had a little account to settle between ourselves," replied the German haughtily.

"I am here," said a voice behind the *portière* of the smoking-room.

The Prince turned pale.

The *portière* was lifted, and Stog appeared supported by his two seconds.

"Prince!" he said, "I wish to pay my debts—before I die—pistols—we can—"

"I cannot fight with you," stammered Mulhausen; "it would be the basest cowardice."

"Of which you were guilty, sir, just now, when you spoke of me, whom you believed to be dead, as you did. You dare not look me in the face!'

"I respect your condition, sir."

Stog shook off his seconds, and advanced to a table, against which he supported himself. He was silent for a moment, and then said slowly:

"Listen to me, all of you who are here. These are my last words! I had a family, my duty was to live for them; but I was weak enough to love this woman!" and he extended his arm toward Nana. "I was ready to lose my soul for her sake! I was ready to abandon those who are dependent upon me—to betray my public duties! But Death interposed to save me. Leave this wretched place, young men! This house is a gilded snare! This woman and this man are alike—"

He was interrupted by the blood rising in his throat and choking him.

He slipped from the hands which caught him, and fell upon the table, where the cards were still scattered.

"Take me away!" he gasped. "I cannot die in this house!"

His friends lifted him.

Suddenly he uttered a cry:

"My wife! My children! Mercy!"

These were his last words. He fell dead into the arms of his seconds.

The card-room was presently as deserted as if the players had followed the advice of the dying man.

The horror of the women when they heard what had happened caused them all to take flight. It was whispered among the men that d'Albigny had taken an unfair advantage of his adversary.

The Marquis was left alone with Nana in the card-room, the carpet of which was strewn with gold and spotted with blood. Several of the men-servants were huddled together in one corner, while Luke, as severe and correct in his appearance as usual, stood in the doorway waiting for Madame's orders.

Nana went through the smoking-room to her boudoir. Luke, left alone in the card-room, stooped to pick up the gold pieces.

"I am not the only one, it seems, who robs and steals here," he murmured.

It was not long before the last guest had departed—Mulhausen went before Stog died. And then Luke went up to his attic room. Looking from the window, he saw the shadows on Nana's curtain. He stretched one of his thin arms toward them.

"Why does not one of these wretches kill the other?" he murmured. "If I could only see that, I should die happy!"

And he lifted his haggard eyes to the starry skies, with a despairing gesture.

CHAPTER XXII.

MARGOT, THE UNFORTUNATE.

LIFE went on in the usual fashion at the Naviels'. The days were at their longest. Andrée rose at five o'clock, as did Madame Naviel and her husband. The workwomen, whom Andrée lodged in her house, came down at six o'clock, and after their breakfast went to the atelier.

All these young girls, to whom Mademoiselle was very kind, ate at the one table and participated in all their home comforts.

About this time Andrée had a recruit from among her former companions in La Rue Paillardin.

Mademoiselle, about sunset one day, went with her parents and Lucien to the Parc Monceaux. A golden light filtered through the tall chestnut trees and touched the spray of the fountain; oblique shadows fell from the lofty Hôtels overlooking the Park. Birds were twittering among the trees, and there was a loud cooing of pigeons from above. As it grew darker, veiled women moved slowly along the avenues, and low whispers were heard from the benches under the trees. The blackbirds became silent; bats flew from tree to tree across the pale blue sky.

A young woman whose face was covered with a green veil walked past the Naviels again and again. Each time she passed Andrée she seemed to hesitate, and then hurried on again.

Lucien was the first to notice this peculiarity.

"It is very odd," he said to Andrée; "one would think that woman wished to speak to you, but did not dare do so."

"If she comes back again, "answered the young girl, "ask her what she wants."

It was ten minutes before she reappeared.

The gas under the polished globes of the lamps was being lighted, when Lucien again saw the same mysterious figure opposite.

"There she is!" he said. "If she looks at you again, I shall speak to her."

This time the unknown came much nearer the bench on which they were all sitting.

"Do you wish to speak to us?" asked Lucien.

The woman stopped, and said in a husky voice:

"Yes."

"What is it?" asked Andrée.

"I wish to thank you for having defended an unfortunate creature like myself on the day of the Review."

"Margot! Can this be you? My poor girl! how low you have fallen!"

"I cannot help it, Mademoiselle; I could not obtain employment."

"Have you really tried?"

"Yes, I have tried; but as soon as it was found out who I was, I was dismissed. Then, too, Jules did not wish me to work, for I did not make enough money—he would not lift a finger. You know Jules, the former servant at Paillardin's. But he has been very cruel to me, beaten me more than once, and some time, instead of going back to the attic where he is, I shall throw myself over the bridge on the railroad track, a train will pass over me, and there will be no more of Margot. I had a terrible time the day of the Review."

"And what was the trouble then?"

"I had spoken to a young man, that was all. One of the four officers coaxed the others to let me go—"

"The tall one, I suppose?"

"No, indeed; he hates us, but the others were not so hard."

"Margot, do you really wish to lead a different life?"

"I wish to do so, but I am not sure of myself."

"Do you wish to make another effort?"

"Indeed, I do, Mademoiselle."

"Well, then, come and live under our roof. You will

eat with us, and need not set your foot out of doors for some time."

"I should like that—but suppose Jules should come for me?"

"He will take care not to come when I am home," said Naviel.

"He has no right to enter our house, even if you are away," added Andrée.

"But," said Lucien, "she must take all her belongings from where she has been living. How will she manage that?"

"I can't get them. Jules would surely kill me. Besides, I owe money there."

"How much do you owe?"

"Five francs for to-day and the same sum for to-morrow. I pay by the day, and in advance."

"Well, we will advance you that on your month."

"But Jules will kill me, I tell you, if I go there alone."

"We will go with you," said Monsieur Naviel, "Lucien and myself."

"That will not do, sir, but if Madame and Mademoiselle went it would make it all right—otherwise, Jules would think I was not telling the truth."

"I beg your pardon," Lucien observed, "but it seems to me that it is not a place where two respectable women ought to go."

"I am not afraid," Andrée answered. "You will be with me, and my father also. Ah! Lucien, help me to do a kindly act!"

Margot sobbed out her gratitude at Andrée's knees.

"You do not know how grateful I will be! I was guilty of a most villanous act toward you, and I can never forgive myself. Help me to rise from the mire in which I lie. Alas! what can a poor girl do alone against the whole world? We drink to dull our sorrows, absinthe, brandy, everything, and this soon finishes us."

"Come, Margot," said Andrée, "where do you live?"

"Rue de Lévis."

All the family rose from the bench. Lucien, who

had come that evening without his mother, offered his arm to his *fiancée*. The stars were shining, and the air was sweet with the breath of flowers.

When the Naviel family reached the Rue de Lévis, Margot stopped at a narrow door. This door led into a paved alley, which was also a gutter, through which ran dirty water.

In the rear was a square courtyard, in the corner of which a worm-eaten staircase led to the first floor of a hideous structure.

"We must not all go up together," said Margot to Naviel, "the stairs are not strong."

"Are you afraid?" asked Andrée.

"I am afraid of being beaten," the woman answered.

"Then we will go with you," said Andrée.

"Let me pass," interposed Monsieur Naviel. He and Lucien went first, and were followed at some little distance by the two women.

A frightful odor rose from the muddy courtyard. The house in the rear, where Margot had a room, had only two stories, while the one in front had five. Long gutters spread across and down the leprous walls like a gigantic vine, and burst into flowers at the windows in each passage-way in large calyxes of zinc.

The chimney of a manufactory near by flamed all night like a gigantic candle, and threw a yellow light on the wall of the large house, where the shadow of the smaller one darkened the lower floor.

The *rez-de-chaussée* was occupied as a storehouse for hand-carts, which the *concierge* let by the hour to the fruit-women of the vicinity, who at dawn went to make their purchases at the Central Markets.

At the top of the stairs, up which Margot led the way, there was a gallery outside, the floor of which trembled in a treacherous manner; this was the only issue from the bedrooms—of which Margot's was the last. There was no light in the window.

"There is no one there," said Andrée.

"He may have gone to bed," whispered Margot, as she went in.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PLUCK AND DETERMINATION.

SEVERAL moments elapsed. Margot could not find the matches. She felt for them with trembling fingers, but, careful as she was, she knocked a pipe from the mantel, which, falling on the floor, was broken to pieces.

Margot sighed deeply, and at last succeeded in finding two or three matches in the bottom of a soap dish, and snatching the brass candlestick she carried it to the window, and lighted the half inch of candle remaining in it. Then her companions looked in. The floor was of brick. At the end of the room was an iron bed, still unmade. A red carpet was spread by the side of this uninviting couch. On the mantel, in front of a fly-spotted mirror, was a bottle half filled with brandy, by the side of which was a glass apparently just emptied.

A trunk stood open near the chimney. At the foot of the bed was a small closet, lighted by a pane of glass in the door.

Several old skirts hung against the wall. Margot went up to this closet, and looked in. A mattress was spread on the floor—it was there that Jules slept.

He was not there now, and Margot began hastily to get her things together before his return. She thrust the skirts into the trunk, and took from a drawer in the bureau, a few articles of underclothing, and from another a tooth brush, a fan, a comb, and a pair of gloves, all of which she tossed into her trunk, which she then fastened with a padlock, the key of which she put in her pocket.

"Now, let us go," she said.

"One moment," observed Monsieur Naviel; "is the room taken in your name?"

"I don't understand."

"Do you pay the rent?"

"I should say so. Jules does nothing. Good Heavens! what will he say when he knows I have gone? But, wait here a moment, I want to ask the *concierge* if she will allow her son to take my trunk. Is it far to your house, Mademoiselle?"

"No. Only to the *Square des Batignolles*."

"If you require any one, I am here," said a voice behind them.

Margot became very pale.

"It is Jules," she said, under her breath.

A man stood in the doorway. He wore breeches of coarse white linen, a shirt tied around his waist by a scarf of blue flannel, and around his throat a silk handkerchief knotted with studied negligence. On his head was a smoking-cap, and on his feet red slippers. He came forward slowly, with his hands in his pockets, and addressing Margot:

"I told you," he said, "that if at any time you wanted to return from whence you came, that is to the House of Correction, from which I was foolish enough to take you, I would carry your trunk for you, otherwise your trunk would remain here, and you with it."

"But all that is in it belongs to me," said Margot.

"Nothing belongs to you, my girl, do you know that? I was accepted as your security at the Préfecture, as you well know, and it is owing to me that you are not in the House of Correction to-day. You must remain here."

"It strikes me that this woman is free to choose between the life she lives and the honorable existence which we offer her."

"She is not free."

"That is preposterous."

"I will let you see that you are mistaken. Let her try to get away—that is all!"

"You will not strike her while we are here, my man."

"Neither your wife, nor your daughter, nor even this tall fellow will prevent me."

"No,—none of them will prevent you. I will do that by myself."

"Well! we will see. In the first place, you are all in my room; do you understand that?"

"No, Monsieur, we are in this woman's room; it is taken in her name."

"That is false."

"She says so."

"Then she lies."

"But is it not she who pays?"

"Most certainly."

"Well, then—"

"Ah! you do not believe me. Wait, and I will call the *concierge*."

He went out on the gallery, and called over the railing: "Holloa, Mother Grappenet!"

"Coming—coming—Monsieur Jules!" grunted an oily voice from below.

Presently, the stairs creaked under a heavy weight, and in a moment a very stout woman entered.

Mother Grappenet wore a black skirt covered with grease spots, and a pelerine equally shabby and dirty, shiny and worn. A cap once white had long strings, the ends of which had been dipped in a bowl of coffee. Her small eyes disappeared under a ridge of fat. She wore her scanty gray hair in bands—two tiny curls were glued to her temples.

Her upper lip was covered with a moustache, and on her chin was a large mole from which grew three long hairs. Her fat, short hands were stained with the snuff which she continually used.

"What can I do for you, my boy?" she asked.

"These people, Mother Grappenet, wish to take away this woman's effects."

"Without giving me notice? Without paying me?"

"Who should pay you, Madame?" asked Lucien.

"Monsieur Jules, of course."

"Monsieur Jules has the money in his pocket, but he will not pay, therefore Madame's things cannot be taken away," said the man, in a tone of insolent triumph.

"Nevertheless, they will be taken," Monsieur Naviel replied.

"And how will you manage that?" snapped the *concierge*.

"By paying you —"

"Yes, by paying me a week in advance at five francs per day—which comes to thirty francs."

"Excuse the question, Madame," observed Lucien, "but was this room taken by the week or the day?"

"By the week, sir."

"It is false!" cried Margot. "I have my last receipt; here it is."

Jules snatched at the paper to destroy it, but Naviel pushed his arm aside.

Andrée took the receipt.

"It is for five francs, and dated yesterday," she said. "You owe her no more than that. Here are your five francs, Madame."

"I accept nothing," cried the old woman, "and the trunk shall not go out of here!"

"Nor the woman either!" grumbled Jules.

"Now," said Lucien to Jules, "you will leave this room—"

"I! and by what right do you give this order?"

"It should be very plain to you: this room is let by the day, and is paid for in advance. Now as no one here has paid for it, it is not let; I therefore engage it. Here are your five francs, Madame."

Madame Grappenet took the money.

"That is so," she said to Jules. "You cannot prevent me from letting my room."

"But I have had it for some time."

"Yes, and paid for it with Madame's money, and as Madame is going away, why, of course—"

"But at all events, I have the money to pay you for to-day; here it is."

"Excuse me," Lucien said, "I engaged it first, and I double the price; here is another five franc piece."

This was too much for the woman; she did not hesitate any longer, but at once threw Jules over.

"No, my lad, you must go elsewhere," she said, as she refunded the money.

"Clear out of here, all of you!" cried the man, utterly exasperated. "Make haste, or there will be blood shed!" With a rapid movement he drew a knife from his belt. The *concierge* fled instantly.

Monsieur Naviel took three steps forward, and the man leaped upon him with the knife uplifted. Madame Naviel threw herself between them and was wounded in the arm.

Andrée uttered a cry of anguish. The engineer strove to snatch the knife from the wretch. The sight of the blood on his wife's sleeve infuriated him, and he felled the aggressor to the ground.

"Now, give me that knife," he said in a loud voice, "or I will pitch you over that railing into the court-yard below!"

Jules grasped the knife tighter and with the hand that was free tried to trip up his assailant, but Naviel saw what he was doing and soon stopped it by pressing one foot on the man's breast. Jules still held the knife. The engineer pushed his wrist against the glass of the closet door, the glass broke and the man's wrist was severely cut. He uttered a sharp cry, his teeth chattered, and he fainted. The knife fell on the floor.

At this moment several voices were heard below in the alley which led to the street.

"It is the police," cried Margot, "I recognize their voices."

Up the stairs came the heavy footsteps of four men in uniform. Naviel had just tied his handkerchief around his wife's arm to stop the blood.

Margot threw water in the face of the wounded man, who soon regained consciousness.

"It is you," said one of the men, "who is making all this uproar again, is it?"

"No, it is not I, it is Jules, who wishes to prevent me from working."

"Yes, that is true enough," the *concierge* said, who

had returned to the fray when protected by the police. "Yes, the room is paid for, but Monsieur Jules would not allow her to go away, and even attacked Monsieur."

"You confounded old fool!" muttered Jules.

"Explain all this to us," said one of the police to Monsieur Naviel. "Why are you here and what do you want of this woman?"

Monsieur Naviel related the facts, which the man proceeded to write down. He asked the address of all those present, and then concluded: "There has been an attack in this house. We must take this woman to the station. If you come to-morrow to claim her, the Commissioner will decide; if you do not come, she will be sent to the Dépôt, and then to Saint-Lazare, for this sort of thing must be put an end to."

Margot began to speak—

"Not a word! Make no resistance," counselled Naviel. "Unjust as the law seems, it must be obeyed. I will see you to-morrow. Your effects shall be taken to my house."

The police went away taking Margot, who was meek and resigned, and pushing Jules before them, who swore like a trooper.

Margot was not utterly discouraged, for in the depths of her soul a hope had been awakened by the promise of work—and work purifies!

The next day Monsieur Naviel went for Margot and took her home with him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DON GIOVANNI.

NANA was dressing for the opera, which was *Don Giovanni.*

D'Albigny, as he drew on his gloves, examined her with the air of a connoisseur. Her coiffure of black pearls in the blond ripples of her hair was very effective.

Virginie had gone, as Madame had given her the evening.

Suddenly the Marquis laughed aloud.

"Oh! oh! Nana, what do I see? A bad sign!"

"Well! what is it?" she asked, impatiently.

"The beginning of the end, my dear."

Her color faded.

"A silver hair in your golden tresses, Nana."

"Pshaw, it is you who are growing old, Marquis. Your sight is failing."

He leaned toward her, pulled out a hair, and showed it to her.

"You are right," sighed Nana, "we must play our cards—"

"And with greater caution than ever. Above all, indulge in no weakness for any one."

"Have you suspected me of any weakness of the heart since you have been aquainted with me? If so, I should like to know the name of the happy mortal."

"The name is Stog."

"He never was my lover."

"So much the better for you, my dear. What would you have got out of Stog? Such birds have not feathers enough for you, my dear."

"Pshaw! It was a mere caprice which would not have lasted long."

"At twenty you had a right to caprices," said d'Albigny, "but nowadays you have no time for follies. I

am your faithful ally, but on one condition, that you will be my instrument, an instrument of flagellation for the whole human race. I have not dragged my title through the mire, I have not identified myself with you to assist now in romantic idyls. You must serve me in something as I have served you in many things. I ask you now one, what you meant to do with Stog? Did you intend to ask him to give you the position of Postmistress in some country town? I should have liked to see you in the exercise of your functions. Ah! Nana you threw away a splendid Future!"

"I should have made him very useful. I should have found positions for hundreds of creatures who have been deserted by my admirers. Have you as much as that to offer, d'Albigny, and are you not more of a burden on me than I am on you? Come now, which of us ought to feel most contempt for the other? Is it the woman or the Marquis?"

"Bravo! Nana! Bravo! How I admire you! You have a sharp tongue, and are not afraid to use it. You have wit, too. Exercise it, my dear, it keeps you young. It is only the young who have the right to be foolish."

"Do you think I care for one single white hair. If I need money, I can sell my hôtel and live on the proceeds. If poverty and old age threaten me, I shall not live to see them. So much the worse for my creditors! for my jewels, my furniture, my stables, and myself—I will set on fire! Yes, I will burn my hôtel during a fête of which all Paris will talk. What do you say to that idea?"

"Nothing, my dear, except that I advise you to postpone your incendiarism as late as possible."

"Of course."

"Well, listen to me now. Your hôtel is worth ten million; your pictures, your jewels, your works of art come to four million more. You have a capital of six million, therefore, lying idle. Your investments do not amount to a million—that is to say they give you only

an income of one hundred thousand francs, a sum which is altogether insufficient to feed and pay your servants, to keep up your stables, your park, your hôtel, and your—Marquis! What remains to you for your table, your toilette, etc.? Nothing, absolutely nothing. It is essential, therefore, that you should find some means of augmenting your income. At present we have two resources—one, the Rajah, whom you put out of doors on the occasion of your fête, and why? He is fascinated by your beauty, he is jealous of me, and yet I advise you to be reconciledto him."

"And the other resource, what is that?"

"Only that you should begin by separating your daughter from the young man she wishes to marry. We should find him very much in our way. The first thing, therefore, is to prevent this marriage, and whenever you say the word the thing is done. You may found a dynasty, if you will. There are plenty of adventurers, whose merits are far below yours, whose power has become hereditary, and I will be the herald of your presumptive throne. I will proclaim your daughter as your successor, and all the world will hail her with acclamations!"

"Yes, they will shout 'The Queen is dead! Long live the Queen!' Thanks, my dear. I am not quite ready to be buried yet. I am still beautiful, and I prefer to be Queen."

"Queen-mother, then; so be it."

Nana's violent temper here broke loose. She revolted against this cold raillery.

"Leave this room, Marquis! Leave my house!" she cried. "I dismiss you as I would a lackey!"

"Then you must give me a week's notice, Madame," said the Marquis, whose *sang froid* was proof against anything she could say to him.

The storm of wounded pride raging in the woman's head was calmed by this cold reply.

"Upon my word!" she said, "you are stronger than I—I will do whatever you say."

"Remember, I speak in your interest entirely, Nana.

Take your Andrée home. Her beauty will adorn your fêtes. She will attract new faces and full purses, and we will manage these gentlemen as we choose. By the way, I met your Rajah to-day at the Bois. He thinks of no one but you. He was driving in an open carriage alone, and looked ill—his eyes were sunken and his face drawn. I stopped him."

"You stopped him, Marquis! Are you mad—he wants to kill you."

"Pshaw! I am not so easily killed. Can you guess what he asked me?"

"No; go on."

"He asked if you were dead."

"What a strange creature he is!"

"And I asked him to come and sup with you to-night after the opera."

"You were very wise, d'Albigny. They say he is rolling in money, just now."

"Which you will take possession of. Offer him your hôtel. Talk as if you were willing to divide with him, and he will divide with you."

At this moment Luke came to announce that Madame's coupé was at the door.

"Be sure that supper is ready at twelve o'clock," said Nana to the lackey. "You are coming back with me, d'Albigny, are you not?"

"Not this evening. I will take you to the loge, where the Rajah will join you, and then I must go to the club for the night."

"Then set the table for two," Nana continued, addressing Luke.

The servant bowed silently, and watched Nana and the Marquis as they descended the stairs.

The Boulevards were brilliantly lighted. The chairs outside the cafés were arranged in double rows, for the night was charming.

D'Albigny had matched the horse remaining out of the four, and Nana now drove only two. She had taken an economical freak within the last few days, and had only one footman. D'Albigny had pointed out to her

that her extravagance could not continue, and Nana was retrenching.

Paris at this hour was very fascinating to the woman who had grown up and developed amid its excitement, and Nana lay back in her carriage watching café after café which they passed. The doors were wide open and the light streaming out on the sidewalk; women were flitting past, and the waiters within, their white aprons tied tightly around their waists, freshly shaven, and their hair crimped on hot irons, were hurrying around the tables with marvellous dexterity, holding on three fingers, trays of drinks.

When the coupé stopped in front of the Opera House, Nana took the arm of the Marquis, and ascended the steps in silence. In the vestibule they met the Rajah.

"Behold your servant!" was his salutation.

"An emancipated one," she replied.

"Who asks for his chains again."

"With the hope of revolting and commanding in his turn!"

"With the hope of attaching the Queen of his heart to his destiny."

When she reached her loge, Nana dismissed d'Albigny, who said to her softly: "I abandon you to your fate!"

Then, bowing to the Prince, he departed.

The house was crowded. Every one of any importance then in Paris was present. The women were in full dress, and snowy shoulders in the loges glittered like marble under the shower of light from above, which fell too on shining hair, where a cluster of roses bloomed or a single white camelia. Jewels, too, sparkled on every side. Heavy perfumes mingled with the odor of fresh flowers in the atmosphere, even at that early hour very oppressive.

A buzz of voices and an occasional silvery laugh rose to the high ceiling.

At last the leader of the orchestra raised his bâton, and the overture began.

The Indian Prince was seated close to Nana, so close that he was able to touch her hand with his, which trembled nervously.

He did not hear one note of the first act of *Don Giovanni*. He did not see the splendor of the house. He was conscious only of the fact that he was near this woman who had inspired him with a mad and fatal admiration. He forgot, moreover, that he had given Luke poison with which to strike her dead.

But Luke had not forgotten it, and at this very moment had gone to his attic to procure the capsule.

"I have no heart for anything," he said to himself, "so long as she lives. This accursed madness is slowly killing me; I must end it all. And now, Prince, to obey you!"

CHAPTER XXV.

A DAINTY SUPPER.

"THEN we two are to sup alone, are we?" asked the Indian, when the curtain fell at the end of the first act.

"Entirely alone, Prince."

"And you will never dismiss me again?"

"Never. I wish you to esteem me always."

"If you will care for me Nana, my life will be a heaven in which your eyes will be the stars. The men of this land know nothing of adoration, adoration as we, the children of the sun, understand such. What do these songs of love which we hear amount to? Your poetry and your music are as cold as your skies. Your poets are not to be compared to ours. Twenty thousand years have elapsed, and we still recite the words they wrote with their blood in our books."

"But are you ready to sacrifice everything for me? My hôtel is yours, I am ready to share all with you—"

"And d'Albigny, what of him?"

"Oh! he shall go—"

"Do you mean you wish me to live in your hôtel?"

"I wish to share everything with you: my house, my jewels, my horses, everything; I give my all to my Lord, my Prince!"

"And I will bring you my diamonds. A Jew offered me six million for them, but I think they are worth much more."

"But we do not need the diamonds, we had best sell them."

"As you please. We will sell everything, and you shall go back to Asia with me. You shall see my country, the land of tigers. You shall have a palace full of slaves. You shall have elephants on which to ride, and armed negroes to defend you. Will you go?"

"Sometime, perhaps, but, my friend, the women of France cannot live away from their land."

"Ah! you prefer your country to me. And yet I, Prince, Rajah as I am, have sacrificed all in order to see you again. And you, in your turn, sacrifice nothing."

"How dare you say that, Rajah, at the very moment when I am about to send from my house to make room for you, the most faithful friend of my whole life? Never will you do what d'Albigny has done for me—never, I say, and yet I sacrifice d'Albigny, I throw him aside, leave him to ruin and death—for he has ruined himself for me—and this you would not do."

"He has given you his gold, you have given him your esteem. That which you gave him lasted longer than that which he gave you. You have fed and lodged him for twenty years, consequently he owes you both esteem and life."

"I tell you, Rajah, that he is ruined, and, for a man like d'Albigny, ruin is death."

"I am ready to be ruined for and by you. I bring to your feet all my treasures, but should you drive me from your house as you drove him —"

"Prince," interrupted Nana, "when a Frenchwoman is threatened she feels she is distrusted, and when she is distrusted, she braves everything."

The Rajah made no reply.

The curtain rose on the second act. Nana left at the close of the third, and reached home about half past eleven. Luke stood in the vestibule waiting to receive them. It was he who opened the door. As he did so, the moonlight streamed in on the marble statues which stood in all their whiteness against a background of large leafed plants growing in huge Japanese vases.

Nana dropped her train and slowly ascended the low marble stairs, against which her blue silk skirts made a soft rustle.

Luke, solemn as usual, followed at a respectful distance.

"Is supper ready?" she asked, half turning her head.

"Thinking that Madame would be at home earlier than she said, I have everything in readiness," answered Luke.

"Very good."

And she threw him her cloak, her gloves and her fan. She nearly buried him under her perfumed belongings, and his head rose from among them with a strange, almost tragic expression on his pale face.

Nana, turning, called the attention of the Rajah to the amusing spectacle, and laughed aloud.

Luke with difficulty restrained his anger.

"One would think I was a clown once more," he muttered.

The Rajah heard him, and as Nana passed on he approached the lackey and said in a low voice:

"Give me back that poison."

"I have not got it," answered Luke, turning to place Nana's wrap on a table.

"That is a lie—"

"Very well, then it is."

"Give it back to me, and I will free you."

"Free me? Do you think I am a slave? The woman whom you have condemned to death will drink that poison. You gave it to me for her.

"I will kill you."

"It is too late."

"Let her live, and you shall be rich."

"I prefer to be revenged."

"I will denounce you then, and she will dismiss you."

"And I will say that you gave me the poison, which is one unknown in France. She will dismiss you from her door as she did once before."

"What on earth are you saying to my people?" asked Nana, astonished at this mysterious colloquy between Luke and the Rajah. She put her tawny head through the *portière* as she spoke, and her large, limpid eyes had a strange, greenish light in them.

"I will tell you presently," said the Rajah, taking her hand to lead her to the dining-room, Luke following them.

The long windows were thrown wide open on the Park, and the wind brought in delicious odors of dewy flowers. A faint blue smoke arose from a pastille burner of beaten silver.

Two Baccarat carafes were filled with champagne, the golden reflections of which lay on the white linen.

A roast grouse was on a silver dish, opposite *a timballe de nouilles au Parmesan.*

On a Sevres dish having Nana's initial, were piled amber grapes, and scarlet crabs were directly under the light which came down from the soft, yellow globes of the chandeliers.

"Did you ever love any one, Nana?" suddenly asked the Rajah, when they were seated opposite each other.

"With real love, do you mean?"

"What is real love, daughter of Europe?"

"That which gives to human beings a longing for immortality, and the intoxication of which, knows no satiety! Have you forgotten, Prince?"

"No; have I not come across deserts and seas to find you?"

"What would you have?"

"Your heart."

"I had one once, I believe; but I was then very young, and I must have given it away."

"To the Marquis, I suppose? Ah! if I were only sure of that—"

"Listen to me, Rajah. It was not he whom I loved twenty years and more ago. The man was a wretch; but he was the father of my child."

"Of your child?"

"Yes; a daughter, whom I sent to the *Enfants Assistés*, and I had the father arrested."

"For what?"

"Because he had stolen—to be sure, it was for me."

"But why did you part with your child?"

"Because at that time I was acquainted with an old King who did not like children. The Marquis, too, detests them. We cannot always do as we would in this world, you see."

Luke stood behind Nana's chair, with his face as white as his cravat; but it was as if carved in stone. His eyes alone were restless.

"And how happened it that this man whom you denounced did not kill you afterward?"

"Kill me! Oh! Nana is not so easily killed, Prince."

"The man was a coward, I suppose?"

Luke was at this moment filling Nana's glass with champagne frappée.

The Rajah rose to take a seat nearer her, but hesitated, and leaned over her chair instead.

At this moment he saw on the shining floor the shadow of a black hand extended over Nana's glass!

The Rajah caught the glass from the table, and threw it through one of the open windows into the Park.

Without a word to Luke, he drew Nana from the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RAJAH.

LUKE was left alone, a prey to unspeakable torture. That Nana still lived, and that she spoke with such disdain of a Past that was still so dear to him, completed his agony.

The Eastern Prince had dared to say that he—Luke—was a coward, because he had not killed her after she had disgraced him by having him arrested.

And was not the Prince right?

His brain boiled with the shame thus forced upon him.

Was this woman invulnerable? What diabolical power protected her? Three times had he attempted to disembarrass humanity of this terrible though fascinating monster, and three times had she escaped—the last time saved by this stranger.

He took his head in his hands, and sought for some plan by which he could bring a swift vengeance on this mansion, and all sorts of strange and horrible projects seethed in his brain like poisons in a witch's cauldron.

He determined first to look into Nana's room. He extinguished the lights in the salons and dining-room, and then attempted to enter Nana's private apartment, as he had done the night he thought of killing Nana; but he found that impossible, for the door which led to the ante-room was locked.

He ran lightly down the servants' staircase, and out into the Park. The clock of Saint Augustine was striking two, and the moon was sinking behind the tall chestnut trees, the shadows of which lay on the green-sward.

There was not a sound except one sharp whistle on the *Boulevard de Courcelles*—a signal from one policeman to another.

Luke looked up at the hôtel, and saw Nana's windows faintly lighted. They were open on account of

the heat. He knew that in one corner of the hôtel there was a long ladder. He ran to get it, but found that it was fastened to the wall by a padlock and chain. In vain did he endeavor to break one of the links with a stone, and time was passing.

Finding that it was impossible to remove the ladder, he climbed, with its assistance, to a cornice, on which his excessive thinness enabled him to gain a foothold; and from this to the next floor, and crept along on a similar cornice until he reached the half-open window of Nana's room.

His heart beat so forcibly that he was blind and dizzy, and it seemed to him that his brain was dry and shook about in his skull.

He could hear voices within, and presently summoned courage to look as well as hear.

He saw first an Oriental hanging lamp; then several ebony chairs, which were supported on two crouching sphinxes, with ivory claws. On the walls were panels wrought with sphinxes.

Just as Luke looked in, he heard Nana say:

"Let us have more light, Rajah. This lamp is too suggestive of a mortuary chapel."

The Rajah turned in quick obedience to comply with this request. He could find no matches. With a trembling hand, he felt for his portfolio. It contained three of Nana's letters and fifty bank-notes of a thousand francs each.

He took one of these, and, twisting it up, lighted it at the lamp, and then used the flame to light the candelabra.

Nana looked on with a serene smile.

"Give me one," she said, in the coaxing tone of a spoiled child. "I want to light the other."

He handed her the whole roll.

She tossed it on her dressing-table.

"They will do for another time," she observed.

At this moment the clock struck three, and both heard a dull thud, as of a human body falling from a height to the ground.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SELF-DISTRUST.

ANDRÉE possessed a very uncomfortable recollection of her visit to Nana, for she was well aware that the splendor she had seen there had affected her imagination and haunted her memory.

When she discovered during her long, silent days, when she sat at work in usually healthy thoughts, this lamentable fermentation, she began to distrust her own strength, and feel a timid fear lest in days to come she should be unworthy of Lucien.

Her cheerfulness vanished, and she was often very sad.

Lucien saw that Andrée was unhappy. One night, when he was urging her to consent to a speedy marriage, Margot, of whom Andrée spoke in terms of high praise, had gone to her attic-room; Monsieur Naviel was smoking a pipe in the kitchen; his wife was busy in the work-room.

Andrée and Lucien were sitting on the little balcony of the salon. It was the hour when the watering-carts were passing through the streets, and, between the shouts of the children at play, came the rattle of the drops among the leaves of the shrubbery of the Square.

"Of what are you thinking, Andrée?" said Lucien to her.

"Of you, my friend."

"And is that why you are so sad lately?"

"I am not sad, I am serious."

"I am beginning to become very impatient. Why all these delays? Why cannot you become my wife at once?"

"Sometimes," answered Andrée, "I feel as if I were in a dream. I say to myself something will surely

happen—a death or some insurmountable obstacle—or perhaps he will desert me."

"No, Andrée, you do not think that! Why wait any longer? If death should come to me a little later, when I am your husband, I should feel at least that my remembrance would always remain with you. I assure you, Andrée, that it is much better that we should marry at once, insignificant as is the position I offer you; you have accepted it, do not, therefore, let us longer delay our happiness."

"You are right, Lucien, we must marry, and then there will be nothing more to fear. Besides, we shall spend less money then than now. Your mother will live with us, and we will hire a room for her where she can put her things and feel at home. The only serious expense will be my white dress and the dinner, for my orange flowers I shall make myself, and as to ornaments, I want none."

"I intend to give you a gold watch."

"No; why is it necessary for me to know the hour?"

"In order that you may think of me when I am not with you. You will wear it in your belt, and it will whisper that I am coming; and when you hold it to your ear it will say to you over and over again, 'darling! darling!'"

"Then get a silver one."

"No; it must be the color of your hair."

"And when I am old, my hair will be silver. Believe me, my friend, it is not wise to spend too much in superfluities."

"It is not 'we' who spend the money for the watch, for we are not yet married. It is I. Why do you sigh, Andrée? Have you lost confidence in me?"

"Oh! no, Lucien."

"In yourself, then?"

"At times."

"You are unjust to yourself."

"No; I am often disturbed by certain bewildering thoughts with which it is impossible that I could be inspired by anything here in my home. Sometimes I

wish I were rich, like Nana, with carriages and servants, with a house crowded with all rare and costly things. And then I build up a little romance in my own mind. I picture myself driving home from the *Bois* some evening in an open carriage, and I meet you walking with your dear mother, who is very tired. I see that she walks with difficulty, I bid my coachman stop, and I propose to take you both home in my carriage; you accept, we know each other in this way; you fall in love with me, we are married, and your mother is never obliged to walk any more."

"I love my mother, Andrée, but I prefer that she should go on foot."

"You are selfish!"

"Not so. There are only two classes of women who have horses and carriages, Andrée: rich women and worthless women. If you were rich you would not wish to be my wife, and if you were—"

He checked himself. The mere putting such a supposition into words shocked him.

"You mean to say if I were worthless you would not want me for your wife? You are right Lucien. And yet there are men who live at the expense of such creatures."

"Yes, this very Nana, whom you went to see, has a certain Marquis dependent upon her for support."

"D'Albigny," said Andrée hastily, with a little tremor in her voice, and a heightened color.

"How do you know his name?"

"He was there the day I breakfasted with her."

"I am sorry to hear this, Andrée. At all events I hope you were not left alone with this man?"

"But I was, and for some time."

"In that case, I am certain it was all prearranged. You do not know, Andrée, that all these creatures are leagued together to drag down to their level women who are purer and better than themselves. What did this man say to you?"

"He spoke of you."

"Ridiculing me, of course?"

"Do you suppose, Lucien, that I would permit that?"

"What did he say, then?"

"Merely that you dressed ill, at which I laughed, as it never seemed to me advisable that a man should be a walking advertisement for his tailor. He was simply jealous of your good looks and youth. Then, too, he—"

"Go on."

"He was jealous, too, of the affection for you which I could not help showing."

"He jealous of me! I would wager my life that he made some insolent speech to you."

"Let us talk of something else, Lucien."

"No, Andrée; I am convinced that you are concealing something from me, lest I should seek a quarrel with this villain—"

"I assure you—"

"Tell me the truth."

"Well, then, yes, this man did insult me, and I left at once."

"I swear that I will slap his face."

"Lucien, in the name of Heaven, don't have any quarrel, it will do me harm, for no one will understand the truth."

"More harm will be done if all these villains, titled or otherwise, are allowed to insult you in this way. They must be made to see that if hands which toil are not accustomed to hold a sword, they are heavy enough to inflict punishment of another kind. Have you told your father of this?"

"I have done wrong to tell it to you, Lucien. Promise me that you will keep it secret, and that you will not meddle with this Marquis. In the first place, he is far stronger than you. I once saw him engage with a Hercules at a village fair, and although he paid the Hercules to allow him to conquer him, it is easy to see that he could easily beat a man inexperienced as yourself. Besides, he practices fencing daily—"

"You seem to be aware of his habits?"

"I am enough of a Parisian to be informed in

regard to especial celebrities. Everybody in Paris knows Nana and the Marquis."

"And all Paris shall soon know that the Marquis d'Albigny has had his face slapped by an obscure clerk, the *fiancé* of the florist whose marriage Monsieur did his best to break off. I assure you all Paris shall hear this, you among the rest."

And Lucien hastily touched his lips to Andrée's fair brow, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UNWORTHY SUSPICIONS.

THE Rajah was in Nana's boudoir when Virginie went to inform her mistress that a young man wished to speak to the Marquis d'Albigny, and insisted on knowing at what hour he could be seen.

Nana felt that a new danger threatened the Marquis, and was anxious to know whom this young man might be.

She asked the maid what name he sent up.

"That of Lucien Despretz," said the woman. But this name conveyed no information to her mistress.

"Send him into the ante-room," she said.

When Virginie departed to fulfil this order, Nana turned to the Indian:

"Prince," she said, "my days are so fully occupied that I must beg you to excuse me until evening. I must see this young man on business at once."

"And I, too, have much to do," answered the Rajah. "I intend to sell my jewels to-day; and you, in the meantime, must make d'Albigny understand that you need him no longer, and that he must find another home."

"You must permit me, Prince, to deliberate for a few days on the course I shall take toward the Marquis. A man of his position cannot be treated with such scanty ceremony. I shall soon, however, be able to communicate my decision to you."

"You remember what you promised, Nana?" replied her companion, with a fierce light in his dark eyes. "You must choose between my devotion and death!"

"I do not believe in death," she answered, with a ringing laugh.

"Do you believe in devotion?"

"I think not."

"You deny your Maker?"

"I deny nothing."

"But have you not told me within the last twenty-four hours that you would forget the Past for my sake? Your words are like the dew which the first rays of the morning sun take from the lips of the flowers!"

"Go sell your diamonds, as you said, Rajah, and later we will discuss this subject further."

Her bewildering smile intoxicated him. He went away; and when he was gone, Lucien was shown in.

She recognized him at once.

"Do you come from Andrée?" she asked familiarly.

"Quite the contrary, Madame; I come in spite of her. But it was not to you I wished to speak."

"The Marquis is probably at the Club, sir, and I doubt if you could see him at this hour, as, after playing all night, he is probably asleep on a sofa, after giving orders that he is not to be disturbed."

"When shall I be likely to find him here, Madame?"

"The Marquis has no hours, sir."

"I presume he finds this convenient, by enabling him to avoid explanations—and creditors?"

"The Marquis never conceals himself; and those to whom he owes money or blood can always find him. But it seems to me that you cannot come under either of these heads?"

"I do not care to enter into a discussion with you, Madame."

"Permit me to insist, however, on knowing what you want."

"I have an explanation to ask of him."

"Apropos of what?"

"I assure you, Madame, that you have nothing to do with the matter."

"I would wager, nevertheless, that it has something to do with Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel. I don't doubt that the little simpleton has complained of certain politenesses on the part of the Marquis. But they were very trivial, I assure you. It is a way that d'Albigny has; and it is not at all worth quarrelling about."

"I do not intend to fight a duel with the Marquis."

"Do you not, indeed! Let me assure you that d'Albigny does not fight with every one; and I doubt very much if he would do you the honor to accept a challenge from you."

"The honor would be on his side, Madame."

"You certainly have considerable assurance, young man! If you have come here with the idea of provoking an affair of honor with the first swordsman in France, it was with the deliberate intention of making yourself ridiculous. But on this score I am at ease, for all you will gain by your attempt is being put out of doors by my servants. Take my advice, therefore, and return to your Andrée. Keep all this magnificent indignation for her!"

"You may laugh, Madame, for you have more wit than—"

"Than prudence you wish to say, I presume! Please, admit however, that I am very good-natured, since I interrupt you, in order to prevent your uttering such words. You do not know, sir, I see, that, among respectable people, to which class you claim to belong, a man never insults a woman. In coming here, as you have done, you have shown very clearly that you have no claim to being considered—"

"Excuse my interrupting you; but I have told you several times that I did not come to see you. As it seems impossible for me to meet the Marquis, will you kindly say to him that I wish to have a very serious explanation with him?"

"Very well, if you insist upon it, after I have pointed out the risk you run. I wished, if possible, to avoid any talk, for the sake of Andrée; but, if you persist, so much the worse for you, sir!"

"So much the worse for him, Madame. He had no right to address insulting words to my *fiancée*!"

"I knew she had complained to you!"

"The Marquis should confine himself to his own circle of society. There are enough titled women who will listen to him complacently. He need not go to those who listen to him with disgust—"

"How do you know that?" asked Nana.

"I know that because I have faith in the woman I am about to marry; and your sneers will not cause me to doubt her."

"No; but perhaps certain information I could give you would have that effect—"

"Not another word, Madame, if you please!"

"Excuse me. I shall speak. I, at least, deceive no one. I know your Andrée better than you do. Marry her, if you will; but you will repent later."

"I have allowed you to utter these false hints and insinuations, Madame, simply because I wished to see how far you would dare go. You are thoroughly despicable at heart. Notwithstanding all your bravado, you still feel a vindictive hatred toward all women who have a right to despise you."

"Excuse me, sir; was it in order to insult me with impunity that you were so eager to discover if the Marquis was in the house? Remain, if you choose; I have still much to say in regard to your beloved *fiancée;* and when I have finished, I shall ring the bell for my servants to put you out!"

"Call your servants, Madame. Call your household army! There is not one among them who will not say that I am right—"

"Right in insulting Nana, when you are about to marry her daughter?"

"Nana's daughter! Andrée! Not she!"

"You want proofs, do you? There is one that you cannot reject. Ah! you compel me to wound you very deeply, but read it."

She placed in his hand a letter which d'Albigny had brought her the night before. This letter was in reply to the request made by the Marquis for information in regard to Andrée.

It bore the printed address of *L'Assistance Publique.* Monsieur Despretz seized the paper, with a trembling hand, and read the following:

"MY DEAR FRIEND: You ask for an official

communication in regard to a child of the female sex, left at the *Hospice des Enfants Assistés* on the 14th of August, 1860. This child was given to Monsieur Pierre Naviel, engineer, on the 20th of the same month, that is to say six days after the child had been left at the *Hospice* by Virginie, maid to the woman Nana, and in the name of the latter, who was the mother of the child."

While the young man read, Nana fixed her cruel eyes upon him. When he had finished, he crushed the letter in his hands and tossed it on the floor.

"You see that I state nothing without proofs," said Nana, in a hard, distinct voice. "And now if you marry Andrée, you see that I have a right to demand respect from you."

Lucien Despretz did not hear what she said, but turned hastily away, and, rushing down the stairs, nearly knocked over the Rajah, who was descending them with Oriental languor. Then, not knowing where he was going or what he intended to do, he rushed into the Park, and threw himself on a bench where he burst into tears.

Could it be possible! Was it true that Andrée, that vision of girlish innocence, who had first appeared to him that night at the Bouffes, and had haunted his imagination ever since, and now was a portion of his very existence—was it true that she was the daughter of this wretched creature — that the blood of this woman ran in her veins? Could it be that she, whom he worshipped and for whom he cherished such respect, was thus related? He began to be uneasy in regard to this gentle maiden.

Had Nana told the truth. Had this child become the victim of a diabolical plot—a plot concocted by her own mother—and not dared to tell him the truth?

This was why she had been so sad. She was ashamed, and reproached herself for her silence as for a treason towards the man she loved, but she feared to speak openly. If she were questioned, however, her lips would be unsealed.

Determined to know the full bitterness of the cup he was to drink, he started from his seat, and hastened towards Batignolles.

As he passed a cigar shop, he went in and purchased a stamp, and then entered a library to write a note to his employer to excuse himself for his absence.

Dropping his letter in a post-box, he hurried to the Naviels'.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

ANDRÉE was in the work-room when Lucien entered. She rose in surprise at seeing him come in at that unusual hour. She saw at once that he was very pale and strangely excited.

"What is it, Lucien?" she asked, quickly.

"I don't know," he answered; "let me think."

He took up a bit of fine wire, as he spoke, and began to twist it round his finger.

Margot watched him out of the corner of her eye.

"I think there is some trouble brewing for our dear young lady," she whispered to the girl next to her.

Andrée was mounting a rose, and stood with her back to the window through which the morning sun was streaming—the girl's fair head was as if surrounded by a halo.

Lucien looked at her intently. Her eyes as they met his were ingenuous and pure.

He succeeded in restraining the stormy words which were ready to leap from his lips. He had by this time almost forgotten the tie which bound Andrée to Nana. He was thinking only of the interview which had taken place between the young girl and d'Albigny. He had come to her with the intention of insisting on this explanation, feeling sure that she would answer with truth.

He had no doubt of the purity of Andrée's intentions, he feared only that her imprudence would lead, or, rather, had led her into danger.

But now that he was in her presence, he hesitated. He was seized with vertigo, so to speak, on the verge of this abyss of sorrow, in which all his life and happiness might be engulfed.

His anguish became so visible on his frank and

honest face that Andrée, looking up suddenly, was shocked by the expression of his furrowed brow and compressed lips. She threw her unfinished rose on the table, and said in a low voice:

"Lucien, you are concealing something from me. What has taken place between you and the Marquis?"

He took her hand, and drew her out of the work-room.

"I came, Andrée, to ask you what had taken place between yourself and the Marquis?"

"I don't understand you, Lucien. I have told you once."

Lucien was greatly troubled. If what Nana had said was false, then the expression of his doubts would naturally and hopelessly offend Andrée. He knew her so well that he felt sure his *fiancée* would break with him. But to preserve silence now was impossible.

Andrée was puzzled, and somewhat indignant by this time.

"Speak," she said; "you came to say something. You have a question to ask. By your tone and your manner, I divine a doubt. Speak! You are a man. You have, probably, more courage than I. Speak, I say."

"Andrée, do you know what that woman said?"

"Nothing good, of course, and nothing true. Could truth come from her lips?"

"She makes two statements: of the first she furnished proof which I have seen, of the second no proof is possible; but I wish you to tell me the truth."

"Ask me clearly, Lucien, what you wish to know, and I will answer you as clearly."

"Listen to me, Andrée, and understand me. The doubt that I wish cleared up is no doubt of you. Your loyalty is beyond question. It relates to an infamous plot of which you may have been the victim."

"Ah! I see. And you came to ask me this? Ah! Lucien, I would not have believed it of you."

Her voice shook, and, dropping into a chair, she covered her face with her hands and burst into convulsive sobs.

Madame Naviel had gone out before Lucien's arrival. The young people were alone. Andrée had closed the doors of the work-room in order that nothing should be heard in the work-room. Both of the young people were in despair, and yet Andrée did not know all. She did not yet know that she was the daughter of Nana.

Never had Lucien been so struck by the resemblance between Andrée and Nana as at the moment when the girl bade him speak. Her expression then was like Nana's when she sneered at other women. Both were of the same perfect type of blondes. The hair was of the same golden hue, the complexion similar in tone and softness. The atmosphere in which Andrée had lived reacted against all evil tendencies, against the temptations of temperament, but it was easy to see how, under certain conditions, she might have yielded.

It was not long before Andrée dried her tears and raised her head. On her lips was a bitter smile.

"So, sir, you came to this humble home to ask me, Andrée Naviel, what were my relations with the Marquis d'Albigny? Let me go on, sir. What opinion can you have formed of my sincerity? I am humiliated, moreover, that I could have been so mistaken in the opinion I had formed of your judgment, for I see that you are incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood. And I am sorry, too, when I think of your lost happiness, for you have lost the friendship, nay, the love of a woman who would have made you happier than now you can ever be. Go, sir—I pity you, for you have broken off our marriage, and shattered all the fair dreams we had formed. Ah! you must have suffered horribly."

"Yes, Andrée, I have suffered, indeed. All my courage has left me, all my strength of body and soul."

"And you have wounded me horribly, sir."

"Forgive me, Andrée, I do not believe what this woman said."

"You must have believed her, or you would not have suffered."

"Yes, but I believe her no longer, dearest."

"Do not call me dearest, you no longer have the right. You are not my *fiancé* now, and, understand me, you are never to come here again."

"Cannot you understand, Andrée, how I was driven to despair by what that woman said? She told me—"

"Do not repeat her words," interrupted Andrée. "What do I care what a woman like that says of me? What have we two in common?"

"Ah! you will know only too soon!"

"It seems to me that you persist in putting me on the same level with Nana. It is clear, therefore, that you still doubt me. All is over between us, sir, and we must separate."

"But you do not understand, Andrée."

"No, sir, we understand each other no more. Go, I tell you: it kills me to see you."

"Andrée, listen to me."

"I have listened to you too much already. Go away, I tell you. Do you wish to kill me at once? Ah! my God, what have I done that I should suffer thus?"

She began to walk up and down the room, wringing her hands.

Suddenly she took up her mantle and threw it over her shoulders, and putting a hat on her head, tied the strings hastily.

"Andrée, where are you going?" asked Lucien.

"What does that matter?"

"I wish to follow you."

"And I forbid it."

"I wish to know where you are going."

"Indeed! Well, I am going to see Nana."

He tried to stop her, but she disengaged herself and fled from the house.

Lucien could not overtake her until she had reached the street.

"Andrée," he said, breathlessly, "I implore you not to go to that house again. I foresee some terrible misfortune for us both."

"Do not interfere with me, sir, I do not know you."

"Why persist in this comedy, Mademoiselle? Come back to your mother."

"I beg you not to speak to me again, sir. If you continue to follow and speak to me, I shall not answer you."

"Very well, go to Nana, then; we will go together."

Mademoiselle Naviel did not reply, but continued to walk at a rapid pace toward *le Parc Monceaux*. When she arrived at the Park gate she spoke to a police-officer, and pointing to Lucien, she said:

"Will you prevent this man from following and insulting me?"

The officer went up to Lucien.

"Turn about!" he said sharply.

"But, sir—"

"Turn about, I say."

"But, sir, I tell you that this young girl is my *fiancée*, and that—"

The officer took Lucien by the shoulder and wheeled him round.

Lucien did not resist this too zealous official, but hastily traversed parallel streets, hoping to join Andrée before she reached Nana's hôtel. Unfortunately, he went astray, and when he reached the door Andrée had been long since admitted.

CHAPTER XXX.

ANDRÉE'S DISCOVERY.

A LACKEY in livery showed Mademoiselle Naviel into Nana's boudoir.

Nana was taking her bath. The Marquis was alone, lying on a sofa and smoking a cigar.

Perceiving him, Andrée shrank back, but d'Albigny rose.

"You are not afraid of me, my child, I trust?"

"I will wait in the ante-room until Madame can receive me," answered the young girl.

"No, that I cannot permit." And he went up to her and took her little trembling hands in his, and compelled her to take a seat on the sofa.

Andrée had a very bright color, and was out of breath from her rapid walk. Her eyes were as bright as two stars.

D'Albigny was dazzled by this youth and beauty, which recalled Nana of twenty years before. In a solicitous tone, he said:

"You seem agitated, Mademoiselle!'

"I have reason to be, sir."

"And may I ask the cause of this emotion?"

"The cause is yourself."

"Myself! Explain, I beg of you."

"Do you know what my *fiancé* has just said?"

"I confess I do not."

"That in this house you are supposed to be my favored admirer."

"What an improbable story! I cannot see, however, who could have invented it."

"A person who is very near to you."

"Nana, do you mean? It was an idle jest, my child, the pleasantry of an idle woman. She will take it back."

"She must do so, sir. She must undeceive the man who believes me capable of betraying him."

"Why is it necessary to undeceive him? Since he believes it, let him continue to do so. So far as the past is concerned, the statement is false: as to the future, that is uncertain. Do you imagine, Andrée, that I can forget?"

"This is no time for jests, Monsieur le Marquis. I came for another matter, and I wish to speak to Madame."

"Who is at her toilette, and will see no one. She received your *fiancé* in my place; I will receive you in hers."

At this moment there was a discreet knock at the door.

"Come in!" said the Marquis.

The same lackey, who had shown in Andrée, now appeared with a card, which he gave to the Marquis.

D'Albigny read the name aloud.

"Lucien Despretz? Who is he? Say I am not at home—"

"Say you will see him. It is my *fiancé*. I want him to know the truth, sir, at once. I want him to know who is telling a falsehood."

"Very well, my child. But it will be hard lines for Monsieur Lucien Despretz if he is insolent." And, turning his head to the lackey, he said: "Show him in."

The lackey drew the *portière* aside. Lucien appeared, and went directly up to the Marquis.

"It appears, sir," he said, "that you are supposed in this house to be the admirer of Mademoiselle—"

"Excuse me, sir; but on what ground do you appear here?"

"On the ground of being the accepted lover of this young lady, whom I surprise in this room."

"Not surprise," interposed Andrée, "since it was I who induced Monsieur to receive you; for I was anxious that you should have other testimony than mine."

"Which is very easy to give," said d'Albigny.

"Nothing could be more simple. I begin, then, by saying before this gentleman that his *fiancée* is not in any way interested in me. You may believe me, sir," he continued, addressing Lucien.

"I ask no more than that assertion," said Lucien.

"But allow me to finish," drawled the Marquis. "She is not, but she may be!"

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed Lucien, hoarse with anger.

"And is Monsieur Lucien Despretz fully satisfied now?" asked d'Albigny, airily.

"Monsieur Lucien Despretz despises you!" said the young man. "Come, Mademoiselle, let us leave this house."

"Mademoiselle shall not go," said the Marquis. "As to yourself, sir, the sooner you go the better. My patience will not stand a much longer trial. Go!"

"I shall not go alone, Marquis."

"You will go as I wish, and when I wish."

"Try to put me out."

"No; I shall not trouble myself. I have servants to do such things for me."

He rang.

The lackey appeared.

"Put this fellow out," said the Marquis, languidly.

"You are a base scoundrel and a coward!" cried Lucien, lifting his hand.

"You can use what epithets you please, my good fellow; but when it comes to acts, it is a different matter."

And, seizing with his left hand the wrist of the young man, before Lucien's hand touched his cheek, he struck him a formidable blow full in the chest.

Lucien fell unconscious at Andrée's feet.

"Carry that away," said the Marquis to the lackey, pointing, as he spoke, to the inanimate body.

The lackey lifted Lucien by the shoulders, and dragged him into the corridor.

Andrée was about to follow, but d'Albigny seized her arm, and said imperatively:

"Stay here."

"I wish to go away."

"You will remain, nevertheless."

"You have no right to give me any orders!"

"But I have," interrupted Nana, entering the boudoir, wrapped in the folds of an Oriental burnous.

"Precisely, my dear; and I leave you with your daughter, that you may awaken her to a consciousness of her duties toward you—and toward me."

And, with a sarcastic smile, d'Albigny disappeared behind the *portière*.

"In a word, then," said Nana, when she was alone with the young girl, "you are my daughter."

"Your daughter!"

"Yes. Do not interrupt me, Andrée. You are a minor. I have a right to assume your custody, and I do so."

"You are my mother?"

"Yes."

"It is easy to say that."

"And easy to prove it."

"How?"

"Read this letter."

"I will read nothing—hear nothing! I wish none of your proofs!"

"You will not read them? Then, I will read them to you. Listen, my daughter. This is a letter written to the Marquis by the *Assistance Publique*. Listen, and you will understand my rights, which you seem disposed to ignore."

"Let me go, Madame—I implore you to let me go to my *fiancé*, whom the Marquis has nearly killed on my account."

"Your *fiancé*, did you say? Do you suppose I shall give my consent? Oh! you have strange delusions, my dear."

"This is wretched, Madame, and you will repent of this violence!"

"I shall never repent of having snatched you from poverty and toil; and, by and by, you will understand what you owe me. Your head is full of false and pre-

posterous ideas, which the Marquis and I will do our best to correct."

"There are laws, Madame,—"

"Yes, against minors, who wish to leave their mothers' roofs to run after some miserable vagabond. A fine existence that for the daughter of a mother with millions—"

"And how acquired?"

"You should respect them as a part of myself."

"I owe you nothing."

"Yes; you owe me respect. I choose you to read this paper, which I read once this morning to that young fool whom d'Albigny has just chastised."

"Does this paper prove that d'Albigny is anything to me?"

"It proves nothing save that you are my daughter."

"It proves a falsehood, then."

"Say what you choose, my dear. It matters little, since I have the law on my side. I have you here, and I shall keep you!"

"The law will forbid you."

"The law forbids the abduction of minors."

"And that is what you are doing."

"It is what the Naviels will do, in complicity with your lover, if they persist in keeping you against my will."

"We will see about that."

"Ah! my child, you little know how much you are losing by forcing me to such extreme measures. My soul was filled with love for you, Andrée. I was so glad to have found you, so proud of having a daughter whose beauty was worthy of mine. And, now, all this childishness on your part compels me to severity, which, however, is for your own good."

"Was it for my good that you slandered me?"

"Yes. And I acknowledge that I have done so. I have done this in order to destroy all your foolish matrimonial plans. That young man shall never enter these doors again, and you shall not go out, this I promise you."

Some one knocked at this moment.

"Come in!" said Nana.

Luke appeared.

"Ah! Is it you?" she said, with an affectation of the kind mistress. "What do you want?"

"What is to be done with the young man down stairs, Madame? He is coming to, now."

"Toss him into a *fiacre* and send him home. Here is his name and address."

She gave the lackey the card which Lucien had sent up when he arrived.

Luke glanced at the card; a grim smile flickered on his face.

"Can such things be possible?" he said half aloud, and turning hastily away, he fled down the stairs as if pursued by a spectre, and a half insane laugh echoed through the lofty halls.

"Poor *Face-à-Claques!*" thought Andrée, "I wonder if he cannot help me now?"

Nana's voice quickly recalled her to the stern reality of her position.

"Come, my child," she said, "be reconciled to your fate. I will pardon your follies, I will love you myself, and will cause you to be loved by others."

"By your creatures, that is to say—"

"And why not, *ma belle?*" interrupted the Marquis d'Albigny, whose tall figure now appeared once more in the doorway of the boudoir. "Madame has told you that you belong to her now—or to us, rather!"

"I leave you to discuss that point with her," said Nana, rising, and with one glance of diabolical sarcasm she passed out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOCKS AND BARS.

"PERMIT me to leave you," said Andrée, resolutely.

"You have nearly murdered my *fiancé*, and your accomplice has just insulted me. I abhor you both. I shall leave you now."

"No, Mademoiselle, you will not leave me. Your *fiancé* will never believe in you again. Your marriage is broken off. Besides, he will never completely recover from the blow he received at my hands. I thought he was stronger, this poor boy, or I should have been a trifle more gentle."

"You are wrong, and if ever it comes to pass that you meet him again on neutral ground, be sure that he will kill you. I shall beg him to do so. You may be sure of that."

"A young man comes here into my house and insults me, lifts his hand against me, I knock him down, as he deserves, and you blame me!"

"You must settle this between yourselves, sir, it is your own affair. Now, the question to be discussed between us is my liberty, which I want and will have!"

"When you consent to share your mother's roof and mine, you will have all the liberty allowed to women of wealth who lead luxurious lives. I have great prospects for you, Andrée, I intend to make you a Marquise, a real one, duly married at the *Mairie* and the Church, and called the Marquise d'Albigny, having horses, jewels, toilettes, and all that sort of thing."

"The best things in the world are sullied when certain persons touch them."

"And I am one of those persons, I presume, in spite of the fact that I am called the Marquis d'Albigny."

"Name and title add nothing to the real value of people, and a degenerate Marquis is more to be despised

than a man who is a mere adventurer, and makes no claim to be otherwise."

"You are none too amiable to your new suitor, Mademoiselle, but that matters little. I have asked your hand of your mother, and as you are still a minor, your wishes, my child, amount to nothing, and I shall make up my mind to do without your consent. You will find it, therefore, as you are to bear my name, very much to your interest not to drag it through the mire."

"Do you think I would marry you — you, who have been the creature of — of her who calls herself my mother?"

"I wish to end brilliantly, my dear, and you are the means I have chosen. I am not much to be pitied, and many men I know would like to be in my place. I can't for my life understand, though, why you should be so unwilling to marry me. I am not so bad looking, although I am no longer young. I have a certain air, I am in good society, I have money and a name."

"I do not understand you, sir."

"But you will after a while. Your education has been very insufficient, and when you are Madame la Marquise—"

"You horrify me," exclaimed Andrée, "and I am ashamed that a man like you should venture to think of me as his wife. Do you think I am tempted to bear your name? Do you think I don't know the things that are said and believed of you? You horrify and repel me!"

"And how do you know my history?"

"I hear it constantly related in my *atélier* by my workwomen. I hear it everywhere I go. You are willing to marry me, are you? Well, no money would induce me to become your wife. I tell you this with all the frankness of a daughter of the people, and as Nana left me when a child to the cold mercies of public charity, I, in my turn, refuse to recognize her to-day."

"You are wrong, because you could very possibly aid her to lead a different life."

"You may sneer, sir, as much as you please."

"I am not sneering, I am sincere. Look here, Andrée, notwithstanding all your insolence toward me—me, whom your mother respects, I forgive you. I will cheerfully grant you all the time you require to improve, to become civilized, to humanize you, in short. There is only one thing I shall deny you, and that is liberty to return to your daily toil, to mediocrity, and to association with working people. I need a true woman as my wife, and you are capable of becoming that woman. I have promised your mother that I would instruct you, and I will keep my word. You are my prisoner! You will see me very often, in spite of my being so obnoxious to you."

D'Albigny gave a little dry cough, and left the room.

When Andrée was alone, she tried to open the door of the boudoir, but found it was locked. She rang—then rang again. No one came.

She remained alone for several hours, at the end of which time a servant came to take her orders for dinner.

She thanked him, but refused to eat. She was immensely distrustful of all about her, and was afraid of being drugged. She hoped against hope that she would be soon rescued, and became, momentarily, more and more uneasy about Lucien, who, very likely, was seriously wounded.

This abuse of brute force appalled her; while, at the same time, her respect for her lover had increased, for his courage had been undaunted.

She made up her mind to refuse all food, and to die of hunger, if no one came to her assistance.

She hoped, first, that Naviel would come, then Luke, and, finally, that the police would aid her; for she felt certain that either her mother or Luke would make a formal complaint. It was now growing dark, as the evening was cloudy. A servant came in to light a lamp, leaving the door open. Andrée noticed, but without attaching much importance to the fact, that a light smoke came in from the vestibule. The man went out, and locked the door; and Andrée knew that she was again a prisoner.

She again abandoned herself to her dreary reflections.

Suddenly, it seemed to her that a strange heat was in the atmosphere. Where were all the inhabitants of this mysterious mansion? Why was she left thus alone?

She began to pace the room restlessly. As she turned, she noticed an almost imperceptible cloud of smoke coming up from the floor in a corner. This tiny cloud soon became a grey column, which reached the ceiling. The mirror, with its crystal frame, set with amethysts, was soon obscured, and reflected nothing more.

The heat increased, and the atmosphere became almost intolerable. Andrée ran to the window, and opened it. As she did so, she heard the sound of rapid feet running down the stairs, and the cry of "Fire! Fire!"

Andrée recognized the voice of Virginie, which seemed to come from the bath-room, shrieking wildly, "Help! Help!"

At the same moment, she saw flames burst from the lower windows, and a man run out of the gate into the Park.

Amid the cracking of flames, and all the confusion, she heard Nana's voice rising from the court-yard. She was saying, quietly:

"Let them inundate the cellar, then. The result will be an excellent punch!"

No person came to deliver the prisoner. Evidently, it was hoped that the fire could be confined to the cellar—the windows of which now burst open, one after another, and blue flames ascended nearly to the roof.

Andrée now began to feel a mortal terror, for, through every crevice of the boudoir, came a dense, yellow smoke. The girl felt that she was forgotten amid this panic. She was stifling.

At this moment, the long-threatened storm burst forth. The lightning was fearful, and the thunder deafening.

Through the one window, which Andrée had succeeded in opening, poured smoke and sparks, which caught the hangings, and riddled them with black holes, around which the edges were red, and gradually enlarging.

She leaned from the window, and called for aid; but the noise of the engines, the rush of flames and of water, the shouts and the cries drowned her voice, which was faint with terror.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LUKE'S DISCOVERY.

LUKE was not even bruised when he fell the night before. A mass of exotics, with their thick, stiff leaves, broke his fall. He struggled from his leafy bed, with no other injury than a few bruises, and was ready to appear at his usual hour in the morning. He was the first to witness the quarrel of the Marquis d'Albigny with Lucien Despretz.

When he learned the name of the young man by the card which Nana had given him, he was overcome with emotion. This card was like that which he had seen fastened to the door opposite Andrée's, on the day when Pierre Naviel had saved his life.

This name awakened bitter remorse in Luke's heart, and reminded him of a dark page in his history which he had tried to forget. In his early youth he had fled from a young girl whom it was expected he would wed, and gone into the country with the famous Nana, who had quarreled with and ill-used him. Luke was sent, through her means, to prison; and, when released, he was too poor to do more than struggle for himself. Later, when better off, he made inquiries for Adèle Despretz, for this was the name of the girl from whom he had fled; but he could find no trace of her. Still later, he heard that she had been seen in the *Jardin des Plantes*, leading a little child, whom she called Lucien; and he remembered, with a pang, that he had once heard her say:

"If I have a son, I will call him Lucien."

When, therefore, he saw a card, bearing that name, nailed to a door, he fled on the wings of fear, feeling sure that this Lucien Despretz was the son of Adèle.

He returned to the house a few days later, and asked the *concierge* if there was any person among his lodgers named Adèle Despretz.

"We have a Widow Despretz and her son living here," was the answer.

If the young man who had been so nearly killed by the Marquis d'Albigny, dwelt with his mother, and she bore the name of Adèle, then a fatal truth was established.

Andrée Naviel being only the adopted child of the good Naviels, and the daughter of Nana, her father was Luke, who was, in all probability, also the father of Lucien.

This discovery made the marriage impossible.

Luke's heart was nearly broken. A presentiment had warned him that a fatal doom hung over all he touched; and the sad drama of his life now involved the young girl in whose presence he did not wish to bow his head.

He must know the worst at once.

He hurried to the place where the wounded man had been carried.

Lucien Despretz had just recovered consciousness when Luke reached his side.

"I am to take him away," he said to the other lackey. "Go get a *fiacre* for me."

His fellow-servant obeyed, and presently returned, saying:

"The carriage is here."

"Very well. Now, help me carry him to it."

Together, they lifted Lucien, and placed him in the *fiacre*. Luke mounted the box, by the side of the coachman, to whom he gave the address of *La Rue Croisatière*.

This man, the former clown, the once faithless, dishonest cashier, who had borrowed ten thousand francs from his master's cash box in order to buy back from Nana his child—whom this hardened mother had abandoned—this man, we say, now began to fully realize the evil deeds which his devotion to this woman had caused him to commit. He realized the misery that his conduct had entailed on others, as well as himself, and knew, with a fearful foreboding, that any association

with a woman of that stamp must necessarily result in shame and degradation.

The sorrow of Andrée, the unspeakable horror of Nana laying such a trap for the girl, and now the fact that he was taking to his mother the youth whom the Marquis had attacked, filled him with remorse.

Fortunately Luke exaggerated the gravity of the wound, and when he reached his home, Lucien was able, with the assistance of the *concierge* and the lackey, to walk from the *fiacre*.

"On what floor does Madame Despretz live?" asked Luke.

"On the third, to the left."

Luke hurried up the first flight of steps and there stopped, unable to decide what he should say in order to prepare the poor mother for the news he brought.

He rang.

A lingering step, indicating physical and mental exhaustion, a step without vigor or elasticity, slowly approached. The man's heart stood still.

The door opened.

The Widow Despretz appeared, her fair, sweet face crowned by her prematurely whitened hair.

"You are Madame Adèle Despretz?" asked Luke in a voice that trembled in spite of himself.

"Yes, I am Madame Adèle Despretz, and what do you wish, sir?"

"I come to tell you, Madame—excuse me, but I am very sorry—your son—"

"Has anything happened to Lucien?"

"It is not of much consequence, Madame."

"My son is hurt? Where is he, sir? Oh! where is he?"

"With the *concierge*, Madame."

She hurried to the stairs. This woman, who had seemed so broken and weary, recovered her agility, and disappeared down the spiral staircase with the rapidity of a girl.

He followed to assist the *concierge* in bringing the

young man up stairs, and at last they had the pleasure of placing him on his bed.

"It is nothing, dear mother," Lucien said faintly, when he saw the tears in her eyes.

His mother sank on her knees by the side of the bed, and, as she took his hand in both hers, she said:

"Are you saying this only to comfort me? Let me send for a physician."

"No," he answered with decision, "I assure you that I am not suffering, it is nothing."

The *concierge* was sent at once to the apothecary's for some simple remedy.

Luke stood looking at the sad group before him. The light of a cloudy day came through the curtained windows. These windows opened on a court-yard; the room had an almost cloisteral aspect, and might have been mistaken for the cell of a novice.

A table of white pine served for the toilette. Two cane-seated chairs stood against the wall. A walnut bureau held some books which evidently were prizes Lucien had received at school.

Tears rolled down the cheeks of the former clown. Lucien saw them, and was astonished that a servant of his adversary could show so much sympathy.

"Your interest touches me very deeply, my friend," he said at last; "who are you?"

"You may see by my livery that I am in the service of the woman whose creature—"

"He fought with this man on account of Andrée," exclaimed the poor mother. "Yes, that is it. Oh! why did her parents allow the girl to go near that woman!"

"Yes, mother, they did very wrong, for now these wretched persons are telling the most audacious falsehoods about the poor child. They say that on the day she breakfasted there—"

"They may say what they please," interrupted Luke. "I was in the room all the time, and never left it once."

"But, unfortunately, one thing they say is true: Andrée is not the daughter of good Madame Naviel."

"What do you mean, Lucien?"

"I mean that Andrée is the daughter of Nana."

"Impossible! Lucien, you are delirious—"

"No, Madame," said Luke, interrupting, "it is true, and your son cannot marry her."

"But Mademoiselle Andrée is a dear, sweet girl, although she is the child of that woman. My poor Lucien, who is goodness and honor itself, had for a father a very bad man."

The pale face of the lackey grew deadly white as he stammered out:

"Why do you teach your son to despise his father? You do not know what may have driven the man of whom you speak, to the manner of life he adopted."

"As if the man had half as much to bear as I! Look at my white hair, and yet I am only forty-five. Ah! I know men only too well, and know of what stuff they are made—"

"Go on, then, say whatever you choose of him—crush him to powder under your feet. You are quite right, Madame. The man who has destroyed the happiness of your life can be nothing less than a villain. But in the name of Heaven, do not say so in the presence of the flesh of his flesh."

In his agitation Luke opened the wrong door to depart, and found himself in the next room. Madame Despretz followed to show him out.

Hardly, however, was he alone with her and out of the sight of the young man, than he fell on his knees at her feet and sobbed out:

"I am a miserable wretch! Forgive me, Adèle—chase me from your fireside, if you will, but say no evil of me to this unhappy boy whose father I am. If he questions you, tell him that you do not know what has become of me; say I am dead, if you will, for I have long been dead to you both."

Madame Despretz's colorless face was transfigured.

"Ah! I know you now!" she cried, "I know you. You are—just what you say you are—and yet you dare come here! There is the door! Go!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IMPENDING DIFFICULTIES.

WHEN Lucien Despretz was once more alone with his mother, he told her what had occurred.

Nana claimed to have rights over Andrée, as if this woman could again assume rights and responsibilities which she had wilfully and deliberately discarded. More than this, Nana had locked the girl up in a room, and had forbidden her to leave the house. D'Albigny had had the effrontery to say that his plans and those of Nana were all made, and it was only too clear that they were based on the wonderful beauty of the young girl.

At this very moment Andrée was in danger. Monsieur Naviel must be at once informed of what had taken place, but Madame Despretz hesitated to leave her son, ill as he was. Lucien, however, entreated her to proceed without delay.

Both mother and son were ignorant of the law in this case—if the Naviels were only parents by adoption and Nana could prove the truth of her assertion, what then?

"I am afraid that a great sorrow is preparing for you, Lucien," said Madame Despretz. "Who can tell what effect the offers and promises of this woman may have on Andrée! Your *fiancée* is pretty and good, but at the same time she is, as you know, somewhat coquettish, and more than a little adventurous; her imagination is easily kindled, and you must be careful. (After all, life is a struggle, and love a lottery.) Women fall victims to snares of all kinds, but a man may also be deceived—"

"Mother," interrupted Lucien, "your doubts do her injustice, and give me a great deal of pain. Let me be young, let me believe in love. Your marriage was not

a happy one, and my father has given you, I fear, an unfortunate opinion of all men. Yet love exists—I know it well. My youth has been exceptionally discreet, for I have been always at your side. Andrée is the only woman I ever saw whom I would marry, and—" He became excited as he spoke, and suddenly he laid his hand on his breast, and sank back on his pillow.

"Lucien! my child! what is it?" cried his mother.

"It is over," he answered, "it is nothing of any consequence. I received a blow in the chest, and I raised a little blood; but it is nothing. Pray, go at once to Naviel. If d'Albigny has anything to do with him, he will soon find out that it is no fool's play."

The *concierge* now came in with a cup of tisane.

"Drink this, sir," said the old man, a former soldier, and now combining the duties of postman and *concierge*. "Drink this; there is nothing better for a blow like that you have received. If you are going out, Madame Despretz, don't be troubled, I will remain with your son. My wife will see to the loge."

"Very good," answered Lucien's mother, "I will take a carriage in order to be back sooner."

She dressed in haste, putting on her plain black shawl and bonnet, and went away, leaving Lucien under the care of the *concierge*.

Forty minutes later she reached the Naviels' door.

It had grown dark very early, for the sky was covered with thick clouds, deep saffron in hue.

The atmosphere, charged with electricity, seemed to weigh heavily on the trees of the Square. All the branches drooped, while the foliage, covered thick with dust, seemed petrified into stillness. The swallows flew restlessly about, darting through the air like arrows, and uttering shrill cries.

The railroad track was already lighted. A locomotive passed along belching forth thick white smoke and emitting from time to time its whistles of warning, the echo of which rung through the depths of the tunnel.

A flash of lightning tore the yellow clouds apart, and

a luminous streak appeared along the horizon. Large drops spattered on the sidewalks, and distant muttering thunder shook the leaves of the trees.

Madame Despretz rang at the door. Margot opened it.

"Has Mademoiselle Andrée returned?" asked Lucien's mother, hastily.

"No, Madame, and everybody is uneasy about her. Come in, Madame Despretz. I will tell Madame you are here."

"Do not disturb her, I will go myself to the workroom and speak to her there."

"Where is Andrée?" asked Madame Naviel as soon as she beheld her visitor.

"She is with Nana."

"Since when?"

"Since this morning, and my son has been nearly killed by a certain d'Albigny."

"The Marquis d'Albigny!"

"Who knocked him down with a blow on his chest. As to Andrée, it seems that Nana declares you are not her mother, and that she is."

"It is true, Andrée is only my child by adoption, but I have been a truer mother to her than this—woman—who was rolling in gold and yet sent her child to the *Enfants Assistés* by her servant. We had no children, Naviel and I, for the one sent us by the good God had died long before. We both of us loved children, and finally Naviel went one day to the Hospital and took a child who had just come in. It was a girl—I should have liked a boy better, but I let him do as he would. The little one was very sweet. We were told that she was the daughter of this woman, but we took her all the same, and we have never had any reason to complain of her. We want to keep her, therefore, until she is married. We have been told, too, that her mother no longer has any rights over her."

Monsieur Naviel came in at this moment, all drenched with rain.

"You do not know what has happened?" he said to his wife.

"Something good, I hope."

"Yes, it is good for somebody, because it will give a good deal of work to laboring people."

"What is it, pray?"

"Only that I have just seen the firemen rush toward the *Parc Monceaux*."

At this moment, a lurid light flashed into the room through the windows.

The work-women hastily started up to see the fire.

Far away over the trees of the *Parc Monceaux*, against the dense blackness of the sky, rose a column of smoke, growing momentarily larger, and clouds of sparks soared higher still. At the same moment, a formidable tempest coming from the West burst over Paris, and the thunder crashed with a deafening sound.

"I can't make out just where the fire is," said Margot.

Madame Naviel said something in a low voice to her husband.

He suddenly exclaimed:

"Upon my life, you are right! It is the house in which that wretched Nana lives—and you say our daughter is there! Ah! what a misfortune!"

"Would you believe, Monsieur Naviel, that the Marquis d'Albigny has nearly killed my son because he wished to take Andrée away."

"I see what they both want, this miserable woman and the man whom she uses as a tool. Misfortune, indeed!" And he rushed away.

The rain dashed against the front of the house. Pierre Naviel ran as fast as possible toward Nana's hôtel. The light increased at the end of the street. The trees of the Park seemed riddled with flaming holes.

Tongues of fire stretched out, lapping the darkness, and then were scattered by the wind into a shower of sparks.

Monsieur Naviel found two policemen going to the fire.

"It is Nana's house," said one, "I am sure it is."

"Is there any one in the house?" asked Naviel.

"The story goes that there are two or three persons burned to death. It is a great pity."

Monsieur Naviel was too far away by this time to hear any comments. A mortal anxiety in regard to Andrée gave wings to his feet.

Perhaps this Marquis d'Albigny had left the girl to her fate without thinking of assisting her. When he reached the outer Boulevard he was obliged to make one among a crowd of curious lookers-on.

Occasionally, when the wind blew in their direction the heat was intense. Monsieur Naviel got away from this crowd and ran through unfrequented streets, all the time hearing the crackling and roaring of the flames with more and more distinctness.

The storm was passing over, and the lightning was less fierce and less furious. The rain suddenly ceased. The orders of the Fire Department were now distinctly heard, conveyed through a trumpet by a man who stood high up on a wall.

Monsieur Naviel succeeded in passing through a gate which communicated with the hôtel from the Park.

"Where are you going?" asked a policeman.

"I am looking for my daughter, who was in this house to-day and has not since been home."

"I am sorry to say several persons went in who have not since been seen. We fear there are many victims. Only a few minutes ago a lackey ascended that ladder you see there, and entered the window above. He has not been seen since."

"I will try the same ladder," was Naviel's reply.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RUSSIA LEATHER NOTE CASE.

ON leaving the Marquis and Andrée, Nana went to her dressing-room to make her toilette. She was going to the Circus, with d'Albigny, for an hour or so.

Mulhausen sent up to know if he might be admitted. Virginie was dressing Nana's hair when the Prince entered.

"You are divine!" he said, with that exaggerated gallantry which certain foreigners adopt in France to imitate French politeness. "What do you mean to do to-night?"

"I am going to the Circus."

"And you will allow me to join you?"

"Of course. You will dine with me?"

"I promised a friend to join him; but I will be back here in time."

"Why have you not brought him with you?"

"Because I have already too many rivals in your circle. Where — by the way, where is the Rajah?"

"You will see him to-night."

"At the Circus, you mean?"

"No; I had forgotten. I promised to see him on business, and I shall be obliged to give up the Circus; and you, Prince, must go to the Club with d'Albigny. You remember our agreement?"

"What agreement?"

"That we should be partners."

"Very good."

"If you win —"

"We divide, of course. But if I lose?"

"Oh! you must remember that I am your associate in good fortune—never in evil ones! I like lucky people, as a rule."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Nana, who, standing at her mirror, was drawing a black crayon over her brows.

It was Luke.

He seemed to have grown pale and thin. His garments hung loosely upon him, and his silk stockings wrinkled in heavy folds.

He came to announce the Rajah, and drew back against the wall, to allow him to pass.

The Oriental seemed excessively fatigued. He hardly bowed to Mulhausen, but sank into an armchair in sullen silence.

Nana leaned over the back of the chair, and said something in a low voice; while the Prince de Mulhausen sauntered to a window, in annoyed silence.

"Please Prince, tell the Marquis that I cannot go to the Circus. I have to talk business with the Rajah," said Nana, with her little, nervous laugh.

"I understand," answered the Prince, as he lighted his cigar at the candelabra before he left the room.

"You see; I send them all away," said Nana to the Rajah, as the door closed.

"Take this," said the Indian, as he extended a Russia leather pocketbook.

She tossed it carelessly into a drawer, where lay the roll of bills of the evening before.

Presently she lifted her head like a startled deer, and scented the air with her flexible nostrils.

"It seems to me that I smell smoke!" she exclaimed. "How quickly the night has come. There is certainly going to be a shower."

A flash of sharp lightning illuminated the sky.

The Prince de Mulhausen came in at the same moment.

"The hôtel is on fire!" he cried.

"What of it?" said Nana, with a certain hardness of tone. "That is no reason why you should enter my room as if it were an omnibus! Where is d'Albigny?"

"I don't know."

"Come, gentlemen, we will go and see."

She rang the bell, but no one obeyed the summons.

She opened the door of the ante-room, and was greeted by a thick smoke, which nearly stifled her.

"This is horrible!" she said.

"Where are the private stairs?" asked Mulhausen, nervously.

"Don't talk about the stairs!" she replied, angrily. "Find d'Albigny."

But Mulhausen did not move, and she ran through the smoke to the apartment occupied by the Marquis.

He was not there. The smoke became more and more dense. Nana returned to her dressing-room, where her two companions awaited her.

"Let us go down," she said. "The Marquis is very likely down stairs."

She again opened the doors which communicated with the stairs, but the smoke was so thick that only the delicate tips of the exotics emerged from it. Suddenly there was an explosion, and blue flames mounted to the very roof.

Nana hastened back, and closed the doors.

"We three are to be roasted, that is clear!" sighed the German. "Nana, you will certainly be the cause of my death—"

Nana laughed nervously.

"Or you of mine," she said. "Which, after all, would be the greatest misfortune, I wonder? I am inclined to believe, my poor Mulhausen, that it would be easier to find a Prince like you than a woman like me." And she laughed.

"Really," answered Mulhausen, "I do not see anything to laugh at." His vanity was deeply wounded, and he allowed it to be seen.

"Come with me," she said; "I will show you out."

And she guided them down the servants' stairs; but the smoke grew thicker as they advanced, and the walls hotter. However, they finally reached the court-yard in safety. They stood together, and looked up at the hôtel, which the flames were now eagerly licking from top to bottom.

"Heavens!" cried Nana to the Rajah, "you have forgotten your pocketbook!"

The Rajah threw up his arms toward the sky, which was now the color of blood.

"It was written in the Book of Fate, Nana, that you would ruin me!"

"But the fire has not yet reached my room; go back there," she insisted vehemently.

The Rajah looked at her with eyes full of bitter resignation.

"And this, daughter of Paris, is your devotion!"

He turned away, and with one bound disappeared up the stairs and was lost in the smoke.

The darkness in which he found himself was so complete that he had no idea where he was going; he tried to open a door to which chance led him, and under which he saw a ray of light.

"Help! Help!" cried a woman's voice. "I am locked in here; whoever you may be, save me!"

The Rajah started. This voice was new and yet familiar to him. He threw himself against the door, which he burst open.

Andrée Naviel was standing under the dim light of the chandelier. She seemed to have grown taller, and the brilliancy of her youthful beauty was softened by the cloud which hung over her.

The Indian Prince stood still, bewildered and fascinated.

Then, slowly approaching her, he said in a grave voice:

"I am thankful to Destiny which led me here to save you."

"But we may not be able to escape."

"Death has no terrors for me, if I die with you!"

"Who are you?"

"A friend of Nana's."

"The Rajah?"

"Yes, the Rajah—and all that I have in the world is within these four walls."

"We may be able to save your property; there may yet be time."

"All my property is contained in a Russia leather case which I brought into Nana's room an hour ago."

"Come, let us see what we can do."

They made their way to Nana's room, but just as they entered a formidable explosion was heard and the gas went out!

In the darkness, however, the Prince succeeded in finding his leather case and the huge roll of bills.

Then he drew Andrée toward the servants' staircase, the intense heat all the time increasing. The floors grew hot to the feet and the Aubusson hangings emitted an odor of burning wool.

The double doors of the main staircase twisted and turned like living things. Suddenly they split and fell in bits, while the flames leaped through the rooms. At this moment the chandelier on the stairs fell to the mosaic pavement below where it broke with a loud crash.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A STRANGE MEETING.

AFTER his interview with Andrée, d'Albigny, not knowing that Nana would relinquish her intention of going to the Circus, put on his dress coat and white tie. He thought as he did so that, after all, it would be a very wise thing for him to marry Andrée.

Andrée was Nana rejuvenated. He felt certain that beneath this varnish of modest worth were germs of qualities inherited from her mother. He intended to cultivate these germs.

Once invested by marriage with supreme authority, he meant to carry out a plan he had formed. For some time he had felt the end was near and that Nana could not keep up this luxury much longer. This magnificence, though hers, was ostensibly his, and he well knew the importance it had given him in certain business relations, and if he lost this prestige—what then?

Nana was growing old, or, to put it more politely and at the same time with more truth, she was growing older, and when Andrée was his wife, he could induce her to get her mother off into the country, and himself take possession of her property, which was now very much under his control.

His reflections were interrupted by cries of alarm echoing throughout the hôtel.

His first movement was to place about his person all his jewels and all his valuable papers. Then, through the blinding smoke, he made his way down the main staircase and out into the Park.

"Where is Madame?" he asked of the first servant he met.

"In her room, sir."

"Is she alone?"

"I am unable to say."

"His Excellency, the Rajah, is with Madame," said Luke, coming forward.

The Marquis tried to enter the cellars where the fire had begun, but the flames forced him back.

It was just at this moment that Nana went down with Mulhausen and the Rajah.

When the Eastern Prince went back to look for his Russia leather case, the Marquis handed a key to Luke.

"You shall have five hundred louis," he said, "if you save Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel."

"Is Mademoiselle still here?" cried the lackey.

"Yes, in the boudoir; that key opens the door."

The floor of the grand salon fell in with a great crash, and all this time the lightning was flashing in zig-zag lines across the sky. Luke placed one end of a ladder at Nana's window, and presently disappeared over the sill.

"Why did the Rajah go back?" asked d'Albigny of Nana, who had just ordered the horses to be brought out of the stables.

"I sent him for his note-book, which was forgotten by us both."

"The deuce you did!" muttered the Marquis. "Did it not occur to you that he might not be able to find the room, and if he did, that he was quite likely to perish there miserably? I am going to look for him."

"No, d'Albigny—no! You are mad! I cannot understand you—"

He answered under his breath, as he turned away:

"I do not go into that burning pile only to save the Rajah!"

He attempted in his turn to ascend the private stairs, but the heat was so intense that it scorched his face. He went to a water bucket, wet his handkerchief and fastened it over his face like a mask, and made another attempt. This time he succeeded in reaching Nana's room.

An idea had occurred to him as Nana spoke. If the Rajah had lost his way in the burning hôtel and were to perish in the flames, then it were well that M.

d'Albigny should rescue and profit by the fortune he would leave behind.

Suddenly, through the window leaped a man.

"Who are you?" asked the Marquis.

"My name is Naviel."

"For whom are you looking?"

"For my daughter."

"You have no daughter, my good man; the young lady of whom you speak is to become my wife."

"Ah! you are d'Albigny, then? Where is she?"

"That is my affair and her mother's."

"Very good, sir. I have heard much of you, but none of your adventures equal this! Let me tell you, sir, that no father ought to allow a villain of your type to live."

"In the first place, you are not her father."

"By the law, by the affection she shows me, by the respect she gives me, I am her father. Yes, sir, I am her parent far more than is the unnatural creature who cast her off. We have no time to lose. Where is Andrée?"

"I do not know."

"That is false."

"Do you know how I treat people who insult me? Ask the young fellow who came here this morning to lure Nana's daughter away."

"You are a coward! You struck a boy who had not physical strength enough to return the blow. But I am a machinist, and have the arms of one, and you will not now be let off so easily, nor shall you budge one inch until I know from you where my daughter is."

"Your obstinacy will cost us our lives."

"No; I am not afraid of fire, I have spent too much of my life at the mouths of furnaces. So much the worse for you if you are to burn, do you know that?"

"Stay if you will, I am going."

"For the last time, where is my daughter?"

"You shall never know!"

"Villain!" cried the engineer, and, seizing d'Albigny by the throat, he threw him down with one hand,

while with the other he tore the silk cords and tassels from a curtain. With these he intended to bind his opponent.

"Let me go!" gasped d'Albigny. "I will tell you."

Naviel set him free. Then, with the treachery of a tiger, the Marquis leaped upon Andrée's father and seized him by the waist. The attack was so sudden and so unexpected that Naviel was lifted from the floor before he well knew what had taken place.

At this moment, the white silk curtain of the bed burst into flames. The Venetian mirror, with its silver frame, was instantaneously shivered to atoms. The shattered fragments fell on the statue over the clock, which instantly stopped. Naviel had time to clutch the Marquis by the throat and drag him down. The two men fell in a confused mass, one on the other, both struggling and panting like wild beasts, while cinders and sparks were falling from the ceiling.

Suddenly d'Albigny uttered a cry of agony.

"Let me go! I am burning!"

But Naviel was now like a tiger in his rage, as he held the Marquis down close to the floor and proceeded to tie his arms with the heavy silk cords he had torn from the curtain. In his angry vehemence he pulled them so tightly that the blood spurted forth.

"Murderer!" groaned d'Albigny, whose convulsed face, pressed upon the floor, was now burning frightfully.

"Where is Andrée?" asked Naviel once more.

"Loose your hold and follow me, and I will show you."

Naviel assisted the Marquis to his feet, and together they endeavored to enter Nana's boudoir through the ante-room.

But it was too late. The floors were on fire, and it was impossible to advance a step.

At this moment, a phantom with blazing hair and blanched face darted toward the Marquis.

"She is not there—here is the key of the boudoir—I found the door broken in," panted Luke. "She is

probably safe, and now let us look out for ourselves, for we have no time to lose."

"If the child has been harmed in any way I shall hold you responsible, and you will see me again!" cried Naviel in a voice of sinister meaning, addressing the Marquis.

"The floor is falling in—Quick! to the ladder, gentlemen, to the ladder!" shouted Luke.

He was the first to dart through the flames and reach the window.

Naviel went next.

The Marquis was the last. All three climbed out on the balustrade.

The ladder which the lackey and Naviel had used to enter the room was gone!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GOOD ADVICE.

THEY called for help. Their situation was terrible; their voices could not be heard by the people below, for the noise was immense; their figures could not be seen on account of the thick smoke.

Suddenly, the floor of Nana's room fell through on one side. All the furniture slipped on the inclined plane, and the bed itself fell into the crater, from which the flames arose with new vigor.

Luke, Naviel and the Marquis left the window, and clung to the cornice outside. The wall was so hot that they could scarcely touch it.

"I shall jump," said the Marquis, and he leaped from the height.

Luke and Naviel saw him plunge into the smoke.

"If you think you can walk that distance," said Luke, pointing to the wing, "there is a ladder at the window of the *Salle d'Armes*."

"Go on; if I find I can't do it, I will jump," answered his companion.

They were obliged to pass three windows, from one of which flames were belching forth, and it was with difficulty they succeeded in going on. When they reached the ladder, which the lackey had perceived at a distance, their hair was scorched and their garments burned, as well as their bodies, in several places.

When their feet were safe and firm on mother earth the two men grasped each other's hands, and Luke said:

"I have not yet done with you, Monsieur Naviel. Will you permit me to give you a little piece of advice?" And he hesitated.

"Go on—advice about what?"

"What I have to say is in regard to your daughter; I did not know you at first, but I want to tell you that

your daughter must have got away with the assistance of this ladder. And I beg of you to keep her away from Nana. Distrust that woman, look out for her, and for the Marquis still more, for these two are as thick as thieves. They have in their possession ample proof that Andrée is Nana's daughter, and that she is merely your daughter by adoption. They wish to take her away from you, you may readily imagine why. Now, keep your eyes open. You have made a terrible enemy for yourself, and it would really have been better for you had you let d'Albigny alone, or let him broil; either course would have been advisable, but in my opinion the latter was preferable."

"I am not afraid of the Marquis; I have two good fists of my own—he won't touch me."

"No, I dare say not; he won't touch you openly, but he is capable of all sorts of underhand performances."

"I am not afraid, I tell you."

"Nor am I. The worst thing he can do to me is to put me out of doors, if these two have any doors left."

"Any way, it is not a place for a respectable man like you. Look out for something better. Well! good bye. I fancy we shall both of us remember this night."

"Indeed, we shall! And, Monsieur Naviel, I will call to-morrow, to ascertain how you all are, and if Mademoiselle Andrée is quite right."

The two men now separated, Luke returning to give his assistance at the fire.

The Marquis was in the front row, superintending Nana's servants, who formed a chain.

When he saw Luke, he said:

"What has become of that scoundrel with whom we so nearly perished?"

"He is safe, sir, as well as I."

"Very good. It was a lucky thing for me, my good fellow, that you came on hand, for but for you I should have been assassinated by this thief, whom I prevented from carrying off some of Madame's property."

Nana approached, and said, with a wicked smile:

"Luke can prove the violence to which you were subjected, as he reached the spot just in time to save your life."

"Yes; I can give my testimony when the time comes. But you ought to have him arrested at once, if you intend to do it at all."

"Very true," said Nana. "Why did you let him escape?"

The Marquis took Nana's arm, and led her aside.

"You don't understand, my dear;" and he smiled sardonically. "If I had ordered him arrested, he would have been searched—"

"Well?"

"And nothing would have been found on him, and his innocence would have been established. That, you will admit, was not what I wanted. This man has crossed the path of the Marquis d'Albigny. He must be crushed like the others. It shall not be said that a mere workman can insult me, and I not be avenged on him and his! But this, after all, is only a secondary question, to which I should attach very little importance, if I did not see in this person a very serious obstacle to our designs on Andrée. And, supposing that the girl has run away, and that the Rajah's millions are lost—and we see neither the Rajah, his millions, nor the girl again—what then?"

D'Albigny, as he spoke, surveyed Nana from head to foot.

"If Andrée has been saved," he continued, "her preserver can only have been the Rajah; and, if he has escaped with his life, I wonder where he is, and why he has not come here to communicate the result of his search. Luke witnessed the violence of that man (Andrée's so-called father), and we can easily find another witness to affirm that he entered your room by the window. If I, to-morrow, accuse him of having taken away any of your jewels or papers, who will hesitate between the accusations of the Marquis d'Albigny, and this man's denials? He has every

interest in denying, and I have none in accusing. Even if his innocence be finally established, the fact that he has been once suspected will always adhere to him, his reputation will be tarnished, and he will lose his position at the manufactory. I ask nothing more for the time being."

"Very well," said Nana; "do as you will."

"By the way, what have you done with Mulhausen?"

"Mulhausen has disappeared. I presume everybody thinks that Nana is ruined."

"And she is, very nearly. All that remains to you will bring in hardly fifty thousand francs, which, to you, means poverty. As to Mulhausen, he will come back."

"Do you know what has been done with the horses and carriages?" asked Nana.

"They are safe in the Park; but the horses were got out with difficulty. The fire has driven them wild."

"I hoped this part of the hôtel would be saved. And, now, see, the *Salle d'Armes* has caught! I cannot look at this window without remembering how, on the night of the ball, I witnessed your duel with Stog, from the balcony. I saw your shadows on that curtain which has now taken fire! It was a strange sight, my friend. I saw your sword dart out, and then Stog fell. His death, I believe, has brought me ill-luck—"

"Oh! my dear, it is only old women who are superstitious."

"Yes, but don't you see.—Ah! look at the flames! Evidently we shall save nothing but our skins, and bitter days are in store for us both. If you desert me, I shall die like Cleopatra, for I will not live in poverty. I prefer anything to that—even death!"

"Let us say as little of death as possible. Voluntary death is capitulation, and we don't propose to capitulate."

The fire now opened like a fan, spread by an invisible hand. The firemen, discouraged by the futility of their efforts, stopped and folded their arms. The roofs in the

vicinity were kept wet to save them from the sparks and flames.

Every window vomited fire, and, as a last piece of the roof fell in and a chimney suddenly lurched forward, there was a shout:

"Look out! Look out!"

There was a fearful crash, above which rose the agonized shriek of an unfortunate man who was overwhelmed by the avalanche of hot bricks.

"My dear," said Nana calmly to the Marquis, "there is nothing more for us to do here; there is nothing left but the land. Let us take a fiacre and go to an inn."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ANDRÉE VISITS THE SICK.

MONSIEUR LUCIEN DESPRETZ had no knowledge of the fire which destroyed Nana's Hôtel—a direct punishment from Providence, as it seemed.

Returning from the Naviels', Madame Despretz could not conceal from her son her uneasiness in regard to Andrée, who had not yet appeared, but there was a tinge of bitterness in her words which offended him. Lucien could not refrain from protesting in the name of his sentiments for Andrée.

"Dear mother," he said, "I am young, pray let me believe. This morning I was jealous, which I regret more than I can tell you, because but for that, Andrée would never have gone to see her mother and I should not have met the Marquis. Now, however, war is declared between that man and me, and I will kill him, or he me."

"Lucien, if you have the smallest love for me, if you do not wish me to die of grief, you will not do that. You will remain with your mother, who loves you with all her heart, for you are her only hope, her only consolation on this earth, where all else is weariness and disappointment. I have told you very often that I have had many sad hours; my path has been sown with treason and watered with tears. I loved a bad man—"

"Yes, mother, but try and forget the past."

"But I have more to say, Lucien, and now that you are about to marry, you must be told all that I have labored to conceal from you. This man was not my husband."

"Dear mother, I have suspected that, but do you think I respect you less for all you have suffered?"

"But you may suffer in your turn. When Andrée learns the truth, it may be that she—"

"If Andrée be capable of throwing me aside for such a reason, I should cease to esteem her. Only cowardly hearts, and hard ones, can reproach an honest man for the sorrows of his mother and the villainy of his father. Yes, if Andrée should desert me for this motive, far from regretting her, I should rejoice that I was enlightened in time in regard to the true value of her promises. Fortunately, however, I fear nothing of the kind. Andrée is a generous girl, and a trifle romantic. When I say to her—"

"Promise me you will say nothing at all to her before you are compelled to do so by the necessary formalities of your marriage. I had hoped that this secret would be forever buried between us. The day of your marriage, Lucien, another woman will blush more than your bride, and that woman will be your mother! It is not strange, therefore, that I should wish you to remain as you are. I dread, too, that your filial love may be weakened by a new affection!"

"I will say nothing to Andrée if such be your wish. I will suffer in silence—silence is often a falsehood."

"I have been wrong, dear Lucien, in speaking to you of these things, for you are worn out. Rest now, my son, and endeavor to sleep. If you suffer, or if you cannot sleep, call to me, and I will come."

"No; rest, sweet mother, you are very tired from all the events of the day. I will sleep now, and don't be uneasy, for I am not suffering."

She kissed him gently on his brow, and, after arranging his pillows, passed into the next room, leaving the door open between, in order that she might hear should he call.

The invalid tossed and turned for a while, but toward midnight he fell asleep, and did not wake until eight o'clock. The day was bright and cheerful. A lovely summer's sun shone into the court-yard on which Lucien's room opened. Three sparrows chirped on the window sill.

A sharp ring at the bell awakened Madame Despretz, who hastily rose to open the door. Andrée Naviel

rushed in and threw her arms around the neck of Lucien's mother.

"It is I!" she cried; "how is Lucien?"

"He has slept well, and in two or three days will be on his feet again."

"Can I speak to him?"

"Of course—the bell has roused him."

"Shall I go in?"

"Yes, my dear; go in while I light my fire."

Andrée entered the sick room and approached the bed. Without alluding to their quarrel of the day before, she said:

"Has your mother told you how nearly I came to perishing?"

"You! Great Heavens! What happened?"

"After your quarrel with that villain d'Albigny, I was forcibly detained in Nana's hôtel."

"And how did you get away? Who released you?"

"The fire."

"In Nana's hôtel?"

"All is destroyed, and this woman is probably ruined, for I am told that nothing was insured!"

"And you were shut up in that house?"

"I was, indeed, and was forgotten I think, at first. Finally I was rescued by one of Nana's friends, the Rajah. He carried me in his arms through the smoke. We finally reached the *Salle d'Armes*, which being in a wing, the fire had not then reached. The Prince opened the window and leaped down into the Park. Soon after I saw him come back with a ladder. It was in that way I escaped both imprisonment and death. But Lucien, I feel as if these dismal adventures were only the harbingers of others with which I am unwilling to associate you. I am too just not to see that the son of a good woman cannot marry Nana's daughter. I come, therefore, to restore you your liberty."

"You came for that, Andrée?"

"Yes, I thought it more loyal not to allow you to connect me longer with your future. I have reflected much on this point, and I see clearly that I ought never

to marry. Any husband, however humble he may be in origin, would have a right to despise me for mine."

"No, child, a thousand times no. It is not like you, Andrée, to say that; men are not so base as you fancy. A girl is not punished nowadays for her mother's faults, and if there is a person in the world selfish or thoughtless enough to be guilty of such meanness, it is not the man who wished to make her his wife."

"You have a better opinion of that world than it deserves, Lucien. Believe me, I have suffered greatly, and the day will surely come when you would regret having married the daughter of such a mother. Then you will rejoice that we remained as we are."

"Very well, Andrée, say no more. If you do not wish to marry, so be it. The reason you give for the change in your wishes I will accept as the true one."

"Your words imply a doubt."

"Yes. I do doubt, for I can't believe that for such a preposterous reason you would condemn me to death, for that is what it amounts to."

"You make me miserable, Lucien. I assure you that I am so crushed by a sense of my own unworthiness that I—"

"I am the best judge of that. If you refuse to marry me now, I shall believe that you are infatuated with the Rajah or the Marquis. In that case, what would become of me? I should go mad probably, or I might commit a murder, for what would life be without you?"

"Can you suppose that I do not love you? Ah! ingrate, I would like to leave you with this idea, but I have not the courage. You might be happy then, and I could die in peace.'

"You love me still! You should not say, 'I have reflected,' but 'I have not reflected!' I hold you to your word. I close my eyes and my ears. I will hear neither reasons nor explanations. You are Nana's daughter, are you? Very well, and what then? I respect you no less to-day, since I have heard this, than I did yesterday. I love you; will you be my wife?"

"You will regret, Lucien, not having listened to my advice. But I am weak, and yield to your entreaties; we will marry, since you wish it. But if ever you utter one word of reproach, I will never forgive you."

"Andrée, my poor child, what words of reproach could I possibly make use of? Do you take me for a cowardly scoundrel? And now, my dear, we will be married in a fortnight. You will soon be convinced that you did wrong when you called yourself unworthy of me."

"I will go away, Lucien, and let you dress now."

She stooped over him that he might kiss her brow, as he had been in the habit of doing since their engagement. But he drew her down to him and kissed her pretty mouth. She turned her head away quickly, but she could not escape.

Madame Despretz came in at this moment, and stood on the threshold looking at them with a desolate sort of air.

"Ah! what children you are!" she sighed.

When Andrée perceived Lucien's mother, she colored deeply and looked prettier than ever. The green light in her eyes under the dark fringe of her lashes, was like the shimmer of an aqua-marina.

The young girl drew herself quickly from the arms of the young man, kissed Madame Despretz, and, going to the mirror, straightened her hat with its wreath of roses, and, then, without another word, ran quickly away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JARDIN DES PLANTES.

ANDRÉE followed the *Boulevard Masaz* to the *Pont d'Austerlitz*, crossed the Seine and entered the *Jardin des Plantes*, which she crossed diagonally in order to take at the starting point the omnibus for *Batignolles*. As she passed the elephants, she noticed a tall man wearing a turban; she thought him about the same height as the Rajah, who had saved her life the night before.

She was hurrying along with that nervous, quick step of a Parisian woman, who trips over the asphalt with a motion almost like that of a bird over the meadow; but she moved more slowly as she drew near this stranger, who was feeding with cakes, a superb elephant, just sent from Asia.

The animal seemed to feel that he was fêted by a compatriot, for between the two an extraordinary dialogue was going on—the Rajah speaking in Hindoo, while the elephant expressed his feelings in a soft, trumpeting sound.

Andrée at once recognized the voice of the Rajah, before she really distinguished his features, and was about to pass quietly on, when the Prince turned his head.

His grave face at once broke into a cordial smile.

"God is on my side," he said, "since He permitted me to see you again."

His voice was so sweet and so caressing, and, at the same time, so completely and serenely cordial, that Andrée felt almost as if he were her brother.

"I am very happy, Prince," she replied, "that chance has furnished me with the opportunity of thanking you, because it is to you that I owe liberty and life."

"Who was it, then, who detained you in that house?"

"The Marquis d'Albigny."

"And by what right?"

"Nana is my mother."

"Nana your mother? Impossible! Does a flower grow in a desert?"

"Why do you speak ill of a woman whom you have professed to admire?"

"I did not know you then — I had never seen you. There is as much difference between you two as between the star and the light-house."

"But it is useless to talk to me thus, for I am not free."

"Yes, I know; the Marquis wished to kill your *fiancé;* and you despise the Marquis, and you are quite right. I, however, wish no evil to your *fiancé;* on the contrary, I love him because he is dear to you."

"Your heart is of gold, Prince!"

"If it were really gold, you would be rich, because it belongs to you. And yet I do not know your name. It ought to be as sweet as a nightingale's song on a May night."

"My name is Andrée."

"Andrée! Andrée! Is that it? Do I pronounce it properly? Have I a French accent when I say Andrée?"

And he nodded his head gently as he repeated it over and over again, with his soft, Eastern pronunciation.

A long silence ensued.

The two walked side by side for some little time, slowly following one of the long avenues which led to the *Quai.*

The sky clouded over, a chill, autumnal wind whistled through the long avenue, tearing off the yellow leaves here and there.

The cedars in the Labyrinth waved to and fro, like huge fans, against the slate-blue sky, where low clouds, like gigantic masses of gray wool, were blown wildly about.

From the aviaries came the cries of wild birds, and

the roars of the lions were heard, as they paced their narrow cages, occasionally stopping to yawn and snuff the air.

From the Seine came an occasional imperative whistle from the boatmen, while the rising wind blew all the smoke of the factories in a horizontal line toward the east.

Large drops of rain began to fall just as Andrée and the Rajah arrived at the foot of the Labyrinth.

Andrée had no parasol, nor had the Rajah an umbrella. They took refuge under a huge tree—a cedar of Lebanon, which is at the foot of the Labyrinth. The shower was a brief one, but the wind blew a veritable tempest. The trees in the *Jardin des Plantes* bent in the wind, while a flock of crows passed over their heads, cawing loudly.

"Come nearer," said the Prince, in Andrée's ear. "I am large enough to shelter you from the wind. My mantle was not made for rain, still, if you will accept the half, it is at your service."

"Thanks, Prince; I am not cold."

"Tell me—have you only just learned that Nana is your mother?"

"Yes; she abandoned me when I was only a few days old. I was adopted by the kindest, best people in the world. They taught me to work, and to live by my toil; to love all that was good, and avoid the bad. My mother has discovered that I am her child, and is determined that I shall reside with her, and obey her commands."

"Andrée, you must never enter that house again!"

"The fire has settled that point."

"The fire and I—"

"Yes, that is true; I owe you my life."

"And I owe you all I have. Listen to me a moment, Andrée. Do you wish to be rich? I have much to say to you. I have come to Europe to reside. I like Paris, but the climate of Europe is fatal alike to the tigers of my land and to the Rajahs. Let me love you, with the love of a brother and a friend. I will

love those who love you. I will not be jealous of the man whom you marry. I will come to see you sometimes, if you will allow me. My love is deep; but it is patient, because it is eternal. Will you accept my friendship?"

"I feel absolute confidence in you; but why did you ask me if I wished to be rich?"

"Because I am alone in the world; and soon, when I go to join my fathers in the starry realms above, I will leave my fortune to you and your children."

"But if this climate is not safe for you, Prince, you must go away. I could never accept your fortune, if you committed suicide by remaining here."

"Should I go, I should die all the sooner. I need sunshine; but happiness is the sunshine of the soul; and, but for you, all now would be thick darkness around me. Permit me to love you. I will never tell you so. My love will be unknown to every one. You alone, Andrée, will be aware that the soul of an Eastern Prince is hung on the golden threads of your hair. We two will keep this secret."

"It seems to me, Prince, that you are the friend of whom I have often dreamed. But, if I were to say this to others, I should be misunderstood, perhaps, and even my lover might doubt me."

"Then, he would not deserve to be your husband, child."

The rain had ceased by this time; patches of blue sky appeared, and the dark, slate-colored clouds were drifting swiftly toward the horizon.

The old cedars waved their wet branches in the breeze, and the rain-drops fell upon the turf below.

"Adieu, Prince," said Andrée.

"When shall I see you again?"

"Not very soon, for I do not wish to be talked about."

"I will come to see you whenever you tell me I may. But let it be soon, or I shall not live."

"Come to my mother's and buy some flowers."

"Yes—and you alone will know that I come for your

sake. Farewell, now. I shall be in this spot at the same hour daily. Here you can find me if you need me at any time. If, on the contrary, you prefer to write, here is my card, and on it is my address. *Au revoir*, Andrée."

"*Au revoir*, Prince."

She walked away with her light step, her slender form as erect as a dart, followed by a gleam of sunshine, which touched her golden hair.

An hour later she entered her mother's presence. Madame Naviel was waiting for her impatiently. Monsieur Naviel had gone to the foundry at the same hour as usual, in spite of the events of the previous night. Madame took the girl's hands in hers.

"My dear," she said, "you should have heard the truth from my lips. You are not my child, but—"

Sobs choked her voice.

"I took you," she continued, "from the hospital, where your real mother—who is Nana—left you. I have brought you up as well as I could. Neither Naviel nor I have any rights over you, and we leave you to decide for yourself in this most momentous hour of your life. Remain with us if your heart so counsels, or go to Nana—we will not reproach you. Do not stay with us from any feeling of gratitude, nor through duty. Remain with us only from affection. Now, you must decide for yourself."

"I have decided, mother."

"Thank you, dear, for still employing the name that has been so dear to us both."

"And to which you alone have any right. This is my home, and here I shall remain."

"It is well, my daughter. Your heart is better than your head, for I cannot always trust your judgment. Yesterday morning, now, why did you go to that woman's?"

"I had a good reason, dear mother; but we will not talk of that now—my marriage with Lucien is decided on."

"I am very thankful, for last evening I believed

that I should never see you again, my poor little Andrée, and Naviel thought the same. When he knew where the fire was, and that you were probably in that Hôtel, he went off like a shot. It seems that he came very near strangling the Marquis. Who was it, after all, who saved you?"

"An Indian Prince whom Nana once bankrupted, but who has lately returned to Paris with another fortune. Everything he brought from Asia was in the house of this woman, and, thanks to me, he saved it, but I am inclined to believe that Nana will have none of it."

"And why?"

"Because she allowed him to see too clearly, that she tolerated him only for his millions. She sent him into the fire to save them, and now he has an absolute contempt for her."

"Ah! well, my child, these are strange people, with whom you had best have as little to do as possible. You will marry a good man who loves you, and one day will be much like another, full of content and happiness. I have grown old almost without knowing it. My husband has always been tender and careful of me, and I have done my very best to please him. After a hard day's work, or when I was troubled about money, I never complained to him, but let him go to sleep fretted only by his own anxieties. You see, my dear daughter, when a woman has a good husband, she is better off than if she had the wealth of the Indies."

Madame Naviel was interrupted by a violent pull of the bell.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FACE-À-CLAQUES.

MARGOT rushed into the salon, and fell at Andrée's knees in tears and sobs.

"Ah! Mademoiselle," she cried, "a man dressed like a lackey in livery is at the door, but I recognized him at once—it is the one who arrested me the day of the Review. He wants to see you—I am sure he has come for me."

"This looks badly," murmured Madame Naviel, and then bade Margot follow her to the *atélier*.

Andrée, who was perfectly undisturbed, said to her mother:

"Be calm, and let him come in. This man is our friend—he is the one whose life my father saved."

When Andrée was alone, Luke came in, lifting his hat with its blue cockade from his head.

"I come, Mademoiselle," he said, with preternatural gravity, "to tell you that your father is in great danger from the machinations of my master, the Marquis d'Albigny—if that be really the name of the villain—he may have stolen that as well as everything else, though."

"And how can this man injure my father?"

"By assailing his reputation as an honest man. He will not hesitate to accuse him of anything—of having robbed him, of having set the Hôtel on fire, or of having tried to murder him; and, upon my word, there is no way of proving the contrary on this last indictment."

Andrée turned very pale.

"And what is to be done?" she asked.

"I will tell you all I know. In the first place, I come to you from Nana and the Marquis; they are at an inn waiting until apartments can be arranged for them.

They mean to sell the horses and the carriages, the land where the house stood, everything, in short. They are utterly ruined — these excellent people — and I think they rely on you to lift them to the top of the ladder again. I was bidden to say to you that, if you would come quietly to them, they would let Naviel go in peace; if not, the Marquis would file a complaint in regard to the wounds he had received, and would charge Naviel with an attempt at murder. You see, my dear young lady, this looks pretty badly."

"Very well, if the Marquis files a complaint against my father, my *fiancé* will file one against him."

"Excuse me, Mademoiselle, the Marquis would have the right on his side in the one case; in the other, where my—your *fiancé*, I would say, is involved, that the young man was assaulted by the Marquis is certainly true, but who is to prove this? Besides, they will do their best to make Naviel out very different from what he is, and the presumptions will be against him."

"I cannot and I will not go near that woman again."

"You are right, Andrée—excuse me for calling you Andrée. You have no idea what you are to me, and I did not know myself until a very few weeks ago, although I was strangely moved when I first saw you. Nature always speaks, Mademoiselle. The Naviels are only your parents by adoption. Nana is your mother—but who is your father? Do you know?"

"No," faltered Andrée.

"Your father is the former Pierrot, the former *Face-à-Claques*, the Luke of to-day, who has changed his name as often as he has his social position. I am your father, Mademoiselle."

"You!"

"Yes. Twenty years ago I was devoted to this woman, but she has forgotten me, and although she sees me every day, I have so greatly changed that she does not recognize me. I tell you this only because I wish to prove to you that your marriage must not take place. Otherwise I should have continued to conceal the useless truth."

"You claim to be my father, but that is no reason why this marriage should be broken off."

"There is a reason, nevertheless, which I cannot give you, because it involves the name of a woman, but the fact of your being the daughter of a creature like Nana and a worthless vagabond like myself should be reason enough for you. You do not yet know who and what I am. You see me now wearing a livery, and you have seen me in the dress of a policeman. I am a policeman to-day, and have been placed in Nana's hôtel and service simply as a spy. You pitied me when I was a clown, kicked and insulted. But this is not all. I have been a thief and an assassin. Yes, Mademoiselle, yes, my daughter, your father has robbed and assassinated, and, more than that, it was I who set Nana's hôtel on fire—yes, it was I, Luke—! And now, if you do not think me entitled to the contempt of all honest men, I can only say that I think you very extraordinary."

"Why do you tell me all this, if you are my father?"

"Why, my child? Because I know you. You will never impose on Lucien Despretz a wife with such a parentage, and will yourself break off the marriage. Believe me that this must be done. I am a rascal, but I love you. I have not one ounce of honesty in my whole body, but I have a heart full of love for you. I have nothing against this young man—quite the contrary. I would like to see you happy together, but it is impossible—impossible!"

"I do not believe you—no, I do not believe you. One of two things is clear: either you lie when you say you are an assassin and a thief—when it is clear that some strong interest induces you to lie—and if you are what you say, a lie more or less makes very little difference to you—or, you tell the truth when you accuse yourself of all these crimes, and you are not my father. You, Nana and d'Albigny are in league together, and have woven some frightful snare for me."

"Can you think that? Will you not believe that I tried to kill Nana, and that I succeeded only in killing

her gorilla? I wished to protect you from her then as I do now. Have I not forbidden you to yield to any of their solicitations, and directed you to stand firm against all their threats?"

"But you oppose, as do they, my marriage to Monsieur Despretz. Why is this, I ask?"

"Because the marriage would be fatal to you in this world and the next. Ah! my little Andrée, I am very miserable. I adored your mother, and yet I have tried to kill her three times, and three times the arch-fiend has protected his own. Let her look out for the fourth. I have planted myself in her home, like a worm in the heart of an apple, to gnaw away the core, and I have made a good beginning! I must go now."

"You told me that the Marquis d'Albigny was about to file a complaint against my father, and you came to put me on my guard. For that I thank you."

"I have done my best, little Andrée, to put you on your guard, to protect you and all those who love you. I shall continue to do the same as long as I have blood in my body. Do you remember that day at *Saint Cloud?* How angry d'Albigny and that woman were when I exposed their clever swindle. I began my revenge that day and have kept it up until yesterday, when I dealt a heavy blow to them. Do you remember, too, that I protected you that day? So I shall continue to do, and I love you now better than ever. I do not ask you to return that affection. I am ugly, I am wretched, and I am of low station; I admit all that; none the less, however, am I your father. But enough; I am going now."

He took three steps toward the door and then came back.

"Once I ventured to ask you to let me kiss you," he said. "It was that night in the Park — when I left you after you had been in the circus tent—we passed the gingerbread stall, and then the wooden horses. You were small then, and were not ashamed to be kissed by old Pierrot, while to-day it is of no use for me to call you daughter. But, never mind, I love you all the same. I am really going this time."

He went to the door and turned to look once more at Andrée. The sun had come out and was shining in the long window. The girl stood just where she was bathed in the light.

Her beauty was resplendent. The transparency of her shell-like ears, the gold in her hair, the brilliancy of her coloring, and the dainty dimples in her cheek were all brought out by this strong light. Her Greek profile, the light tendrils of her hair falling on her low brow, her straight nose with its sensitive nostrils, her red lips, her graceful form, full bust and slender throat, her small head and exquisite feet and hands all made Andrée the most perfect type of youthful beauty, just blooming into maturity.

Luke dropped on his knees before her:

"Oh! little Andrée," he exclaimed, "let me kiss the hem of your robe."

And saying this, he hurriedly pressed his lips on Andrée's skirt; then rising, he rushed with all possible speed down the stairs, calling back, as he went, with the odd, squeaking voice of the clown:

"I am really going now, Mademoiselle, really going!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE GRAND HÔTEL.

THE evening of this same day, Monsieur Naviel did not return at his usual hour.

Dinner was placed on the table by Madame Naviel, who openly expressed her anxiety at her husband's non-arrival, while Andrée hid within her own breast the poignant terror she had felt ever since her interview with Luke, the lackey, who claimed to be her father.

She cared little for what he had told her about herself, as in reality it in no way changed her position. She, in fact, had begun to think Luke a little crazy. The lackey did not interest her as *Face-à-Claques* had done, who submitted to everything like a beaten hound.

Luke, on the contrary, appeared to have taken vengeance into his own hands. He had become excitable and eccentric, and struck her as a person whom it would be well to avoid in the future.

The advice he had given her, however, in regard to her adopted father could only have been prompted by a knowledge of the true state of things. Consequently, when her father did not return, Andrée did not dare confide her fears to Madame Naviel. She even affected an air of indifference as she said that she would not wait any longer, as she had some little business to attend to.

She turned the corner, and at once took a carriage and drove to the manufactory where Naviel worked. It was nine o'clock when she got there. The heads of the house had gone. She found only the overseer, who answered her roughly:

"You ask where Naviel is, do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well! he is in prison!"

"In prison?"

"Precisely; for having committed a robbery last night during the fire."

"It is false!"

"Zounds! girl, do you think I don't know what I am saying? There has been a grand row here to-day, but that, of course, is none of my business. I only know that he would not have been arrested if there had not been a good reason for it. There is no smoke without fire, you know."

"Where have they taken him?"

"To the police court, I suppose."

Andrée had a sudden idea.

D'Albigny accused her father of having taken the property belonging to the Rajah.

The Rajah alone could prove his innocence, by showing that the property in question was his own, and was now in his possession. The Prince had given her his address that same morning.

She hastened to the Grand-Hôtel.

The Rajah was in his private room, when word was brought that Andrée Naviel was below and wished to see him.

He at once obeyed this summons.

"I was thinking of you, Andrée," he said, as he entered the reception room. "I trust it is no misfortune which has brought you here."

"Alas! sir."

"Tell me at once. All that mortal can do to dry your tears, I will do. Speak—I obey."

"My father is accused of having taken from Nana's house valuables which belong to you. Now, did you not take them yourself?"

"Yes, most certainly. Here they are in the same portfolio."

"Will you swear this, and release my father from prison?"

"I will go at once. A *coupé* is at my orders always until midnight. It is at the door now."

He rang. When the *garçon* appeared, he said:

"See that my *coupé* is in readiness."

Then the Rajah left Andrée alone, while he went to his dressing-room to make some change in his *toilette.*

The Rajah's windows looked out on the *Place du Nouvel-Opéra.*

From the chair in which Andrée sat, she could see the broad *façade*, with its gilded *friezes* and its marble statues, already darkened by the rains of winter.

Gilt figures, holding candelabra, seemed to palpitate in the electric light. Through the columns of the gallery, the lustres of the foyer, were to be seen figures moving about.

There was an incessant sound of feet, and roar of carriages, and the firm tread of iron-shod horses on macadamized pavements, from the *Boulevard.*

Andrée perceived, through the windows, a strip of sky between the roofs, which seemed to be held up by the stars, instead of golden nails.

The *Avenue de l'Opéra* was prolonged in luminous prospective; and the gas, diffused through globes of polished glass, formed one long line of intense brilliancy.

Andrée was happy in the thought that she should be able to deliver her beloved father almost immediately, and even, thanks to the Rajah, leave him without the smallest stain. She recalled all this good man's kindness to her. Her real father could not have evinced more tender consideration, more unselfishness, nor better judgment than he. Naviel had done his best to imbue her with a love of work; he had educated her to take care of herself; he had shown her the inevitable result of indolence and waywardness. She felt a generous delight in knowing that she had prevented her dear mother from feeling unnecessary anxiety; for, from her childhood up, Andrée had given her many shocks.

The Rajah soon appeared, and Andrée at once noticed a change in him. His whole face expressed suffering; about his lips was a certain resigned bitterness. His eyes had grown larger and more brilliant.

"You do not look well, Prince," said Andrée.

"Do I not? I am not well. I raised considerable

blood this afternoon, and really thought I was going to die, and now my cheeks seem all on fire."

"You must leave Paris."

"Never! In life and in death I remain here. I wish to be interred at Montmartre, on the height which overlooks this most beautiful city. If during my life my love has in no way added to your happiness, after my death it will, for it will enable you to do good to those whom you love."

They now took their seats in the carrriage, and drove off to the police station. A half hour later they alighted on the outer *Boulevard*, before a door, over which hung a large, red lantern, on which were the words, in white letters: "Police Station."

The Rajah assisted Andrée up the two steps which led to a narrow corridor. From this corridor they climbed a steep staircase, and entered a room on the next floor, occupied by a man sitting at a desk, and, in a corner, were two others, smoking, while a policeman was walking up and down, before a closed door.

An indefinable oppression weighed on Andrée's heart as she entered this place, which was but gloomily lighted by a lamp, hung from the ceiling—smoking and flaring.

"What do you wish?" asked the secretary, somewhat abruptly.

"I come for my father," she said. "Monsieur Naviel has been falsely accused of having taken certain property last night during a fire —"

She caught her breath here, and her agitation compelled her to stop.

The Rajah took up her words.

"This property," he said, quietly, "belonged to me. It was in the hands of the owner of the hôtel, deposited there for safe-keeping, and in pursuance of an agreement made between ourselves. The greater part of these papers have on them my name and my title. It is easy for me to identify them both —"

"Permit me to tell you, Prince," answered the secretary, politely, "that all we hear of Naviel is in his favor, while our information in regard to the Marquis

d'Albigny, his accuser, is all that is bad. We are only awaiting the return of the Judge to set Monsieur Naviel at liberty. If you will walk into his private office, he will soon be here. There is another affair beside this, however."

"And what is that?" asked Andrée, quickly, who had passed through many conflicting emotions in the last few hours.

"It regards a woman named Margot, who is supposed to be a florist in your establishment. Do you know her?"

"Of course," answered Andrée, impatiently; "she is my very best work-woman."

"She came here to beg me to imprison her instead of your father, and, as, naturally, we could not comply with this request, she insulted us in such a manner that we were obliged to shut her up until the Judge arrives. He will decide whether she is to be released or punished."

"Margot is a spoiled child who is very ignorant," said Andrée. "She is devoted to me—so devoted that any fancied injury to me drives her wild. It is not astonishing that she, knowing my father was here, burst into passionate reproaches when she was informed that she could not be allowed to take his place."

Presently the Judge entered.

"Release Naviel at once," he said to his subordinates.

Then he muttered between his teeth:

"Upon my word, this d'Albigny is the most atrocious scoundrel I ever encountered!"

He seemed to be in a very bad humor. It had been raining for some fifteen minutes. He opened his umbrella and placed it in a corner, and then took off his overcoat.

The door of the room in which Naviel was had been by this time unlocked.

Andrée rushed to meet him, and, standing on the points of her toes, she threw her lovely arms around the bronzed neck of the engineer, and kissed him over and over again.

Then she remembered poor Margot, and, going up to the Judge, she said to him:

"You have here, sir, one of my work-women—a somewhat impulsive, headstrong creature, who is so attached to me, that when she heard my father was here, she came to ask permission to take his place; and, when these gentlemen informed her that this was impossible, she became very vehement. I beg you, sir, to restore her to liberty, and I assure you she shall do nothing of the kind again."

"What did the girl say?" asked the Judge, turning to the secretary.

"Not much, sir. We only kept her to give her a lesson."

"Very good. Now, send her here."

Margot soon appeared, her cheeks still red with the color which anger had imparted to them, her eyes flashing and her hair in disorder.

The magistrate said, in a tone of great severity:

"Are you the person who permitted herself to insult these men?"

Margot was about to reply with considerable vehemence, but Andrée made her a sign, and she dropped her head.

"I warn you not to be guilty of a similar folly again. The next time I shall send you to the House of Correction. Now, go."

On the sidewalk the Rajah held Andrée's hand a moment, and took leave of her in these words:

"You need me no longer. I leave you with your father. Be happy."

"I will call on you, sir, with my wife," said Naviel, "in order to thank you for your kindness."

"There is only one way of thanking me," said the Oriental, "and that is to regard me as a friend, and allow me to come to your house sometimes."

"We shall be greatly honored, sir," answered the engineer.

"And I very happy," sighed the Rajah, as he entered his coupé.

CHAPTER XLI.

NEW QUARTERS.

A FORTNIGHT after the fire which had destroyed the greater part of her property, Nana took possession of her new quarters in the *Rue de Moscow*. The furnishers gave a credit of six months, and d'Albigny hired an entresol in the same hôtel. Nana retained Luke and Virginie, sent away her cooks, her footmen, grooms and coachmen, and sold her horses and carriages. She thought herself very nearly bankrupted, as neither her furniture, her jewelry, nor her Hôtel was insured.

The land had been sold, also the materials, and this sale brought in about eight hundred and fifty thousand francs; but Nana received only half, as d'Albigny deceived her in regard to the sale. She, in her turn, showed a foolish confidence, and signed every paper presented to her by d'Albigny, without examining them or verifying them.

With her previous investments, she had now about two millions, and yet she talked of being miserably poor, and her parsimony was now as excessive as had been her previous extravagance.

Then, with Nana's money, d'Albigny attempted several audacious speculations, and lost in three months three-quarters of all Nana had in the world.

Winter passed; spring had come, and in the month of April the notes fell due which had been signed by Nana when she ordered the furniture for her new apartments.

D'Albigny had made a private arrangement with unscrupulous tradesmen, who, having Nana's signature to bills amounting to fifty thousand francs, while they were worth only thirty thousand, gave d'Albigny a commission of fifteen thousand when the transaction was concluded.

Nana, the night before these notes fell due, had not more than five hundred louis in the world. She went to one of her creditors and asked for an extension. The man refused, but offered to take back the articles he had sold for two thousand louis on payment of one thousand in cash.

She flew into a passion, called him a Jew, and, returning home, wrote to Mulhausen, thus:

"*Friend Mulhausen:*

"To-night I give a little tea. You love music—I have a countryman of yours as pianist, and two or three vocalists of my own land. Come, and we will have plenty of noise. Always your friend, NANA."

Mulhausen arrived, irreproachably dressed, perfumed, and his moustache quite formidable in its points.

Nana was alone.

When Luke showed in the Prince, she laughed aloud at his frightened aspect. The truth was, Mulhausen was excessively avaricious, and, having been half bankrupted by Nana, had kept away now that she was poor.

He felt instinctively that a trap had been laid for him.

Nana's salon, well furnished as it was, did not contain the ghost of a piano.

But she at once began to chatter to the Prince with all sorts of little feminine arts.

"You see," she said airily, "that I have no other guests than yourself to-night—not even d'Albigny. Will you have a cigarette?"

She rang for Luke.

"Bring tea," she said, when Luke appeared.

Luke came back, bringing tea and cakes, and Mulhausen accepted the cigarette with sulky submission. Nana's insinuating tone suggested a loan to be asked for by her. The German Jew characteristics of Mulhausen warned him that he was caught. He had learned, moreover, from a banker, a member of his club,

of d'Albigny's successive losses, and had ventured to say at a café that "really d'Albigny was a most compromising person; and Nana was growing old, no longer the shadow of her former self."

The truth was, however, that not all of Nana's anxieties had changed one thread of her beautiful golden hair, for which Mulhausen would once have paid five louis apiece,—to silver. But this was in the days when she was far more the fashion than now, and since she had sold her horses and established herself on an economical scale, Nana was to Mulhausen only a woman like others.

"Prince," she said, as she filled his cup, "you find me in a tight place."

"So I supposed," he answered sulkily.

"Ah! it was so good of you to come! But, after all, my annoyances are only momentary. The Rajah wishes me to marry him, and, if I can only make up my mind to do that, my affairs will be all right."

"I was told," interrupted Mulhausen, "that the Rajah was quite mad about that Naviel girl who passes for your daughter, and who really is amazingly like you. It is even said that the Rajah is slowly dying because she is to marry some one else."

"I see, Prince, that you are entirely acquainted with my family affairs. They cannot be in better hands, I am sure, and to prove to you —"

"This is excellent tea, my dear Nana, but your cups are not what they ought to be. Where is that beautiful old Sevres? And how can you receive people who respect themselves in an apartment like this. How many room have you?"

"Ten: two salons, a dining-room, a library, a dressing-room and a bath-room. Four chambers, and above, the servants' rooms—though Virginie sleeps down here. I do not like to be alone at night. I have been timid ever since my gorilla was killed, when I was asleep."

"That is very foolish," said Mulhausen, rising, as he emptied his cup.

"Where were you going to-night, in full dress?" asked Nana.

"First here, and then to one of the Foreign Ministers', who gives a soirée, at which I have promised to appear."

She rose, and went up to his side. He looked hastily behind him, with a vague apprehension. She laid both her hands, on each of which shone sapphires, on his arm, and looked in his face entreatingly.

"Leave your Minister," she said, "and remain here. We have never got on well together; you did not understand me, and I often vexed you when I had no intention of doing so, but I always meant you to like me, for I have always thought well of you. I have always had a share of my friendship reserved for you —for you, the best and dearest of my friends."

But Mulhausen was perfectly stolid under this rain of coaxing words.

"I cannot remain any longer now," he replied. "I will drop in another evening."

"No—not another evening; it is this very one which I wish you to give me. To-morrow, I may be dead and you, too, Mulhausen."

"It is impossible for me to remain any longer. I am due elsewhere this very moment."

"Then, Prince," she said, sinking into a chair. "I will not detain you. I will only keep you long enough to ask a word of advice."

"And about what?"

"How I am to pay two thousand louis to-morrow, when I have not a quarter of that amount."

"Mortgage some of your property, of course."

"D'Albigny has bankrupted me absolutely. Everything has been lost at the gaming table. I have one house worth five hundred thousand francs, but I cannot raise forty thousand francs on this house between now and to-morrow, you know?"

"Pawn your jewels, then."

"But that is ruin! Cannot you, dear friend, lend me this sum?"

"I could, if I had it, but I have not a quarter of it. I was nearly bankrupted by you sometime ago, and this is all I can do for you, now."

He took five louis from his pocket, and laid them in one of the saucers on the table.

A brilliant color flushed Nana's face. She started from her chair, and snatching the saucer threw it, the gold and the cup half full of tea which were in it, full in the face of the Prince.

He stood, absolutely stunned by her violence, while Nana rang the bell.

"Bring this gentleman's hat and coat," she said to Luke.

"With pleasure," muttered Luke, as he passed into the ante-room. Presently returning, he helped the Prince to put on the overcoat.

When he was ready, Mulhausen extended his hand to her, but she, turning her back, said to Luke, as she pointed to the gold on the carpet:

"Pick that up; don't you see the Prince is waiting for it?"

Mulhausen buttoned his coat, to give himself the air of doing something, and also to conceal the stains of tea on his once immaculate shirt front. He made his retreat, while Luke picked up the gold.

Nana threw herself on her sofa, still in a rage, her white teeth grinding, one on the other.

Although it was spring, she had lighted a fire, and the red reflections glanced upon her pretty feet in their high-heeled velvet slippers. Wrapping her black satin peignoir more closely about her, she clasped her hands under her head, and deliberately contemplated the coming storm.

Her jewels had cost one hundred thousand francs, and she dared not hope to pawn them for more than two-fifths of their value.

She soon came to a decision. She would pawn them all the next day, unless d'Albigny—

She would go first and see him.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE NEXT MOVE.

D'ALBIGNY'S apartments consisted of eight or ten rooms, all hung with blue Crétonne.

The furniture was scanty and excessively simple, offering a strong contrast to the former tastes of the Marquis. His bed was a low iron one. And in his sleeping-room were only a divan covered with Crétonne, like the hangings, a leather chair and a secretary.

The largest room was the *Salle d'Armes*, decorated with four or five pairs of swords, as many sets of foils, masks and gloves—that was all.

A carpet of gray felt covered the floor.

These rooms were entirely empty. D'Albigny had no servant. He never took a meal in his apartment, breakfasting at a restaurant or with Nana.

It was he who opened the door when she rang.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing, except that I am threatened with a seizure of my furniture."

"I expected as much! Come in—come in. The first note, I believe, was given for the furniture, was it not?"

"Yes; precisely."

"And you have no money?"

"None, whatever."

"Neither have I. You know all my affairs well enough to be sure of that."

"So I supposed. Therefore, it was not for money that I came; it was for advice. Shall I pawn my jewels?"

"By no means! Place all you have of value here, with me—your jewels, furniture, etc."

"You are full of resources, Marquis."

"The worst that can happen is to have your notes protested. The owner of this house will pay herself

when she finds you don't pay, and your other people will take the rest."

"Then, I have left only a house, that is to say a half million. When that is gone, what then?"

"I have a proposition to make. Suppose we stake all that is left—lose it all, or double what we have. Have you the courage?"

Nana did not reply, and d'Albigny began to pace the room, he thinking in what way he could best impoverish her, as she had impoverished so many others.

"And Mulhausen, what did you do with him?"

Nana looked at the Marquis, with a satirical smile.

"What should I do with him?" she asked.

"Take him into partnership, my dear. I am thinking of publishing a theatrical journal, of which Mulhausen shall be editor. To obtain this position he will willingly advance money. I will make him see the various advantages he will reap from it. My German, who would not give a kreutzer to a former friend reduced to poverty, will put his last sou into an affair of this kind. We will look about for some needy and clever literary men. They may do the work, and we will do the management. We will give dinners, balls, etc., and let the company pay the bills. All Paris will learn to know us, and possibly to dread us. We will publish all the society gossip of the day, and you will see that we will make a good thing of it."

"And what will you call the paper?"

"We will decide on that later, for the name is of the first importance. We must find something which will amuse the people and stimulate their curiosity. As to Mulhausen—"

"I have seen him to-night. I sent to ask him to come, that I might tell him how I stood, and ask a favor of him."

"Of course, if you told him that, he did not come."

"But I didn't. I took good care that he should not suspect why I sent for him, but my first words put him to flight."

"A woman like Nana borrows only when on the wane, and Mulhausen—"

"You know him thoroughly, d'Albigny. This man has neither heart nor courage. Will you believe that he had the audacity to offer me five louis. I threw them in his face."

"You did well. Now is your time to claim your Andrée. She belongs to you, insist on your rights. Would it be disagreeable to you to play for her benefit the part of a repentant woman? You must separate her from that young man. This gossip about the Rajah and your daughter you can make useful. You can play one of these men against the other. Before long there will be a shock: one of the two will be crushed, and we will not trouble ourselves to put the pieces together again. Courage and audacity are what you need now. Go boldly to the Naviels and claim Andrée. If she is deaf to your prayers, throw yourself at her feet, kiss her, weep, sob, and tear your hair; that will do wonders. I wish I could be there to applaud you, for I am certain that you would be as beautiful as Sarah in *Hernani*, as Favart in *Marion Delorme*. You have played the parts of Marion and Marguerite on the world's great stage, with a magnificence which has won for you the hatred of your rivals, and the admiration of your adorers. You must do battle, my dear, with evil fortune, with indifference and oblivion. A woman like you should die when young and beautiful, in some grand rôle supremely played, in which she should draw tears from the most skeptical eyes. Come, now, walk down the room; let me see you move."

Nana obeyed. Her long peignoir swept after her in a rustling train, with soft undulations, with lights and shadows in its shining folds.

She laughed with a ringing laugh as she rehearsed her silent rôle.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Superb! Bravo!"

He applauded.

"Perfect! Wonderful. That look of haughty pride becomes you well. Go on as you have begun, my dear, and when you want your hôtel rebuilt you will have

no difficulty. It must be done. D'Albigny is nobody without Nana's hôtel. I am not recognized at the club nor at the Bourse, and I am hardly noticed on the *Boulevard*. This can't go on. We must make one grand, final effort. Come, now, let us sell everything out that we have; let us take another hôtel, entertain handsomely, and live as of yore for another year. I will undertake to keep things going that long."

"And then?"

"Before the end we shall have found some reliable source of wealth. Once upon a time your eyes shamed your diamonds; now, your diamonds will cause your eyes to be admired! Then, too, remember you have Andrée, for have her you must. Do you understand me? I insist on it."

"I will try, but I shall not succeed."

"What day will you make the attempt?"

"To-morrow."

"Very good, and do not speak of the *Mont de Piéte* again. A woman like you has nothing to do with that institution."

Nana felt greatly encouraged by the determination of this man, who was the fire in the infernal locomotive which had for twenty years carried her successfully through her mad career.

"I thank you, Marquis," she replied; "you shall have a power of attorney from me to buy and sell as you will, and we will live one more year as we have lived many. At the end we shall find either success or a ditch by the wayside. To-morrow I shall go for Andrée, you understand. If she will not come, woe on her and those about her. I shall find some way to revenge myself!"

"You are right, my dear. Now, take my advice, and get a good night's rest. You must take care of yourself. I will think over our plan."

"Good night, Marquis."

He bowed over her hand with courtly grace, and his kiss concealed a cold, sarcastic smile.

She left the room.

Then, d'Albigny, rubbing his hands, murmured under his breath:

"We shall gain a year in that way! The five hundred thousand francs will have a merry dance, but no more speculations, it is a risky game to play. What a farce life is, and what fools we meet every day of our lives! I wish, though, that I had been able to shut up that brute of a Naviel for six months. As to the *petite*, if she comes within my reach, I will teach her that I am not to be trifled with!"

He began to smoke a cigar now, sitting at the open window. The stars were out, and toward the *Saint-Lazare* station a fan of light opened out. Along the façades opposite were many lighted windows. Occasionally a slender hand would part the curtains, and a graceful feminine head would peer down into the street, hoping to recognize the step of the person for whom she was waiting. By degrees, every light was extinguished and every casement closed, except one just opposite on the fourth floor.

When the Marquis felt the heat of the cigar under his long moustache, he tossed it away, and dropped the window, muttering:

"A plague on all the Nanas!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

CAMELIAS AND ROSES.

NAVIEL did not choose to return to the foundry where his arrest had taken place, and he sent in a request to be appointed as engineer on one of the railroads. His appointment kept him in a state of anxious expectation all winter, during which time he remained much at home, talking little and smoking a great deal, sad at being of no use to those whom he loved, and humiliated to the bottom of his soul that he had been suspected.

As to Lucien, his recovery had been slower than he had hoped it would be. He was not able to resume his duties until a month after his injuries, and when he got to his desk he found his place taken by another man.

The winter, therefore, was as sad to him as to Naviel.

The women, too, were not prosperous with their trade. They sold few flowers. The German importations, the supplies sent out from the convents affected them very much: a certain restraint existed now between the Despretz family and the Naviels.

It was necessary to wait several months before the expenses of the marriage could be met. Andrée was willing and yet unwilling to make a change. The words, uttered by the man whom she refused to call her father, had produced a profound impression upon her. She had not been able to pierce the mystery in which he had encased his declarations. She felt that there was some mystery which might yet destroy all her hopes. In spite of this conviction however, she had gotten together her bridal toilette. Her white dress was ready, and also her wreath of orange blossoms. She kept them in her wardrobe, enveloped in tissue paper.

Luke had not been again seen at the Naviels'. Lucien spent almost every evening with them, and when by chance he failed to come, by reason of other engagements, he wrote an excuse to Andrée.

The Rajah called on Andrée in the afternoon, his physician having forbidden him to go out after sunset, but he did not come very often. Whenever he did, he brought to the young girl a bouquet of camelias, and then took a chair in the *atélier* with his back to the light, glad to see his shadow spread over the table and play on the swift-moving fingers of the fair florist.

The beauty of the young girl seemed to him to increase daily. She wore her hair, which had a natural wave from the parting, swept back and fastened in a knot low in the neck behind, where it was held by two aluminum pins with large heads.

The work-women sat at a table in another corner, where they chatted in an undertone. The Rajah spoke little, for fear of saying too much, and spent every precious moment in contemplation of Andrée.

One day she wished to show him how to make a rose. He paid so little attention to her instructions, or it may have been the indolence inseparable from the Asiatic character, which prevented him from accomplishing anything that looked like a flower, as the petals were within, and the stamens without.

"If I were poor, I should die of hunger," he said, in a tone of disgust.

Andrée tried to console him for his failures. But he suffered mentally as much as he did physically, and the least contradiction reacted on his nervous nature.

An inward fever consumed him. His black eyes opened under their heavy lids, blazing with hidden fires, but he restrained any verbal expression of his feelings.

In the beginning of April, Monsieur Naviel received his nomination as an engineer in the *Compagnie de l'Ouest*, and Lucien Despretz was made cashier in the office of a great Journal, with a salary of three thousand francs.

All was rejoicing in the Naviel mansion. Andrée's fête day was the first of May, and the evening before, Lucien, finding himself detained by his monthly accounts, wrote that he should not be able to see her until the morning of her fête. With this note he sent a bouquet of big white roses.

That evening, by an unusual chance, the Rajah appeared, preceded by an enormous bouquet of orange flowers and violets. The work-women had all brought flowers to the Naviels also.

The salon was crowded with them. The Rajah looked thinner and sadder than ever.

He said to Andrée as he entered:

"When are you to be married?"

"Very soon."

"I shall go to the *Mairie*."

"You?"

"Yes, in order that I may see you happy."

"I hope to be so, because I love my *fiancé*."

"You are right; he is good and honorable. Did you receive my flowers?"

"Your bouquet is marvellous. I thank you, but you have forgotten to wish me many happy returns."

"May I kiss you?" he asked. "I have been told that the customs of your land permit it." As he spoke, he kissed her very gently on her eyelids, and then sank into a chair near her side. They were in the salon and alone.

"I think I am better," he began. He then stopped and listened, and then standing up, said:

"Some one is about to knock at your door!"

The words had hardly passed his lips when the bell rang.

"Are you expecting any one this evening?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"No," said Andrée uneasily. "I expect no one."

"Not even Nana?" cried Nana aloud, as she swept into the small salon, and bore down on Andrée at once.

Mademoiselle Naviel rose from her chair.

"You less than any one," she replied.

"Nevertheless, I wish to speak to you."

"Go on, Madame."

"That which I have to say must be heard by you alone."

"No, Madame, we have no secrets, you and I. You have come for some purpose of which I am ignorant, and it is, therefore, best that my parents should be present. I will go for them."

Nana was left alone with the Prince for a few minutes.

"I congratulate you, Prince," she said abruptly.

"Congratulate me! And on what?" he asked with haughty contempt.

"On your choice. I am glad your preferences do not go out of the family."

"You mistake, Madame, I am your daughter's friend. She does not love me."

"Of course not—I—"

"Oh! you—"

"I know what you would say: that I am a most contemptible woman."

"I should not have employed so many words to express the same idea. Now, however, I have said all I wish to say. I shall not speak to you again."

He rose from his chair, and with arms folded under his Indian mantle, and with head bowed, he began to pace the room, awaiting Andrée's return, who presently appeared with Monsieur and Madame Naviel.

"My parents consent to listen to you with me, Madame," said the girl, with a firm voice. "Speak at your ease then."

"And I will go," said the Rajah, "for nothing concerning this woman interests me."

He bowed low before Mademoiselle Naviel, and saluted her adopted parents, passed Nana without looking at her, and left the house.

Then Nana rose. She looked excessively weary. Her cheeks had lost their color and had grown thin. On her discolored lips was a bitter smile. Her brow formerly so smooth and fair, was now covered with fine wrinkles, which were not entirely concealed by the waving hair which fell to her eyebrows.

She went up to the young girl, and, looking at her intently, stretched out her hand to take that of the girl. Andrée drew it back hastily.

"It is useless, Madame," she murmured with an emotion she vainly endeavored to conceal. "You came here to speak to me, and will abstain, if you please, from demonstrations which would be out of place here —say, as soon as possible and in the fewest words, what you wish to say."

"I came for you, my daughter."

"I am not surprised; you have accustomed me to your audacities."

"Do you forget what I am to you?"

"What you are? Ah! that matters little. You gave me birth, it is true, but another woman has fulfilled a mother's duties toward me. You threw me on the cold world, you deserted me at that moment, you detest me now. I believe that you are leagued with your companions to draw me down to your level. If I am not as degraded as yourself, it is certainly not your fault, nor that of the Marquis d'Albigny. How dare you speak of what you are to me? Do you wish me to despise you more than I do now?"

"Notwithstanding all you can say, you will not prevent the truth from being the truth. Ask your parents, if you call them so, if you do not believe me."

"They have told me the truth, and I have told my *fiancé*, for I was afraid he would be disgusted with a marriage on which I had set my whole heart. But I believed it to be my duty to let him judge for himself. My *fiancé* was not deterred, however, by knowing that I had in my veins the blood of a woman like yourself. All men would not have been equally confident."

Nana threw back her head at these stinging words. She felt her cheeks tingle with a smart long unknown.

"Mademoiselle," she said in a sharp voice, "you have no right to insult me, and if others should do so, it was your duty to protect me. If you have been taught otherwise here, then you have been badly brought up, for the first of all duties is respect for the woman who risked death to give you life."

CHAPTER XLIV.

A MAGDALEN IN TEARS.

"NO, Madame," interposed Naviel, "we have not brought her up badly. We have done all in our power for her, both my wife and I, we have taught her how to earn her bread honestly by daily toil, and we have given her the example. When chance threw you in our way, and the child asked who you were, I replied as I thought: 'That woman is thoroughly despicable.' And yet I knew the child was yours, for I was told so at the hospital. It did not prevent me, however, from taking her to my home, because I believed all turned on the way of bringing up a child, and I think I have done well by this one. The girl has rewarded us, her mother and myself. By 'her mother,' you of course understand that I mean the woman who has given her a mother's care and felt all a mother's anxiety. All this proves that it is the clearest nonsense to say that we can't get rid of the effect of original surroundings. You are here now, so please make haste and explain why you came, as we have no time to waste in hearing you talk."

"I have just told you that I came to claim my daughter, as I have a right to do."

"No, Madame, you have neither right nor law on your side. You have endeavored by force to keep this young creature in your house, but you shall never take her from us—at least, not as long as she refuses to go with you."

He turned toward Andrée, as if to question her.

"You know very well, dear father, how I feel," she answered.

"Andrée, listen to me!" exclaimed Nana. "I cannot endure your contempt and your hatred. I have been very wretched—" and she fell on her knees before

her daughter—"yes, I have been very wretched. I deserve all you say to me; but to hear these words from your lips is a punishment greater than I can bear. I suffered every privation before I fell into this life I have led. I never had, like you, good examples before me; I did not grow up, like you, under good influences. As long as I was young, people adored me; now I am growing old, and these very people would none of them lift a finger to save me from starvation. Even d'Albigny, for whom I have done so much, even he—"

"You have only what you deserve, Madame," said Andrée coldly.

"I deserve all this, I know; but I do not deserve, Andrée, that you, my own child, should believe all these people say against me."

"I can only say what I think, when you insist on my replying to you."

"And if your harshness extinguishes in me the last glimmer of penitence, if your words push me back into the career from which I hoped with your aid to emerge, would you not be responsible for all I may do in the future? Come to me, Andrée, watch over me, save and help me! We will reverse the order of nature; you shall be my mother, and will teach me to work. Come to me, Andrée! I am not easily moved to tears, but your contempt and your hatred have brought them now to my eyes. Come, I implore you!"

"I have no faith in your tears; your new-born love, your sudden affection, and your spasmodic repentance are but acting. If it is only for this that you came among people who do not like you, and have no reason to feel kindly toward you, it would have been better had you remained at home, and it would be wiser for you to return there at once, now that you know my sentiments."

Nana had risen to her feet by the time that Andrée had finished speaking. Her nostrils dilated with anger. She was beautiful once more under the influence of excitement.

She laughed scornfully, and, pointing to the flowers with which the salon was filled, said:

"For whom are all these tributes? For this hard-hearted young girl? This girl, who has robbed me of the Prince who has just left here! How gratified the dear Lucien must be with the wife he is about to have. I hope I may see him in order to congratulate him on his *fiancée*."

"Go away, Madame! leave this house!" exclaimed Madame Naviel, white with anger. And Nana, holding her head very high, walked out of the door. Then she turned, and said in a loud voice:

"You will hear from Nana, before long!"

"And you, if you ever do any harm to Mademoiselle, will hear from Margot! Rely on that!" shouted the florist, as she opened the street door for this most undesirable visitor.

Nana did not condescend to turn her head, but slowly descended the stairs, raising her train with her old haughty grace.

The next morning Andrée rose at her usual hour and went to her work.

It was a lovely morning in May. The tender green of the young leaves glittered in the sunshine, which poured into all the windows of the salon, now filled with the delicious odor of flowers. Andrée threw the casement wide open, and the soft, sweet air, and the joyous sounds of the birds among the trees, all lifted the weight from the heart of the young girl.

As the morning advanced, Andrée began to feel uneasy at not seeing Lucien, and began to suspect some machinations of Nana's.

She had no idea, however, of the thunder-clap in store for her.

At noon the *concierge* brought her a letter, which she at once, by the address, knew came from her lover.

This envelope enclosed two letters, one from Nana addressed to Lucien Despretz, and the other from Lucien to herself.

She opened the first, knowing very well that some shock awaited her.

This was Nana's letter:

"*My Dear Sir:*

"You did not choose to believe my statements in regard to Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel, and persist in your intention of marrying her. I have already told you that the Marquis d'Albigny was her admirer. Of course, I can offer you no proof of this fact, only the word of d'Albigny and myself.

"But this is not all.

"It so happened on the night of the fire that Mademoiselle encountered a person whose dealings with me were such that he had placed in my hands a considerable sum of money. This money disappeared that night.

"We at first supposed that Pierre Naviel, the adopted father of this young lady, had appropriated these funds, but we now believe that the said Naviel employs more despicable means than theft to obtain possession of this money — that, in short, he relies on the beauty of this girl. That the Rajah yields with complaisance to these plots, you yourself can bear witness.

"Inform yourself of the hours when the Prince goes to see Andrée, and you will discover that it is always when you are not expected.

"Yesterday, for example, you were prevented from seeing your charming *fiancée*, but the Rajah visited her house.

"I write you these things because I believe you to be as loyal as you are obstinate, and very ignorant of the ways of the world.

"If, however, I am mistaken, and you are fully aware of the attentions of the Rajah, you are entitled to my apologies, which I at once make, for in that case you would be far less scrupulous than I supposed.

NANA."

"P. S. Have not the repeated postponements of your marriage had something to do with the Rajah, think you?"

The second letter, that of Lucien, was almost illegi-

ble, so hastily had it been written, but it was evident there had been an attempt at self-control, and it began, with calm dignity:

"*Mademoiselle:*

"I do not know if the marriage so long looked forward to can take place—I fear not. Obstacles rise on all sides, and denunciations rain down upon me.

"It must be admitted that your conduct gives color to these accusations. I knew that the Rajah had deserted Nana; I knew that to you, as well as to her, he had offered his fortune. You told me yourself, probably to divert suspicions, that he came to Madame Naviel's to buy flowers. I have, moreover, learned that you have been seen at the Grand Hôtel, and also in the coupé of the Rajah. I see no reason why you should have made a secret of these details, and am, therefore, forced to one conclusion.

"The enclosed letter informs me that I was replaced by a rival who has wealth, while I have none.

"I see now the motives of the various delays, on which you have insisted, of the time fixed for our marriage. These motives are plain.

"Listen to me, Andrée. I have suffered through you and for you ever since I knew you. My situation has become intolerable. I believe in nothing—I almost doubt the existence of God; I doubt the sunshine, all because I doubt you. As I told you once before, 'Tell me the truth; deceive me in one thing, and I can never believe in you again.' I could forgive past faults, but not present treachery.

"I forgive you all the misery you have caused me by your levity and thoughtlessness. I love you, and am ready to fall at your feet to implore pardon for this letter, which, perhaps, accuses you unjustly.

"Oh! my beloved! why were we not married earlier? It is now too late, for doubt has come between you and me, and you would never again be in my eyes the little saint, the gentle Madonna, of whom I have dreamed.

'Adieu, then, my beloved! my only love! for I shall never love again. Adieu! Adieu!

"Always your friend,

"LUCIEN DESPRETZ."

Pale and with fluttering hands, Andrée had the courage to hold the letter and read it to the end.

When she had finished it she placed the two letters within the folds of her dress, and, calling Margot, said in a strange, hard voice:

"Margot, bring me my hat and my mantle."

"Where are you going?" asked Madame Naviel, quickly, from the work-room.

"To the Grand Hôtel."

CHAPTER XLV.

A DETERMINATION.

WHEN Lucien received Nana's letter, he did his best to conceal from his mother the impression it made upon him. He was dressing at the moment to go to Andrée, and wish her many happy returns of the day.

He read Nana's letter twice over.

This letter announced facts which it was easy for Lucien to verify—at all events, those which concerned the Rajah.

It was undeniable that the Prince went to Madame Naviel's, that he carried flowers to Andrée, and that she accepted them. It was also certain that the Prince never presented himself there at those hours when he was likely to meet Lucien Despretz. He had, moreover, been there the evening before, contrary to his usual habit, Lucien having sent word to Andrée that he was detained at the counting-house. It was clear, therefore, that Andrée kept the Rajah informed of the absences of her lover.

Crushed under the weight of these doubts, he dropped on a chair, with his head in his hands.

It had often struck him that Andrée offered unnecessary obstacles to their marriage, though Madame Despretz herself, seemed opposed to it ever since she knew Andrée to be Nana's daughter, and still more when she heard of the visits of the Rajah, and by degrees the intimacy between the families had diminished.

Madame Despretz was greatly depressed, and spent days without speaking. She saw no one, and even avoided the society of her son. When she saw Lucien sitting in this despairing attitude, she ran to him, and, tearing away his hands from before his face, was startled by the agony she saw represented on every feature.

She snatched the letter which he still held in his hand and read it hastily.

"Listen, Lucien," she said, as she kissed him tenderly on the brow. "Listen, my son: I have had my doubts for some time; this wretched mother and her no less wretched daughter understand each other perfectly; that is my conviction. The mother wrote this letter to disgust you with this marriage. She wrote it with Andrée's consent. They have now more exalted ideas, that is clear."

"You exaggerate, mother. I believe Andrée to be honorable, though very coquettish."

"A coquettish girl is not honorable! Believe me, she is far less so than the poor girl who falls a victim to her ignorance or her timidity. One has no intention of doing wrong, the other trifles with evil. Which of the two is the most estimable?"

"Not the coquette, certainly."

"You are right. Then, would you marry a woman for whom you have no esteem?"

"But, my dear mother, I esteem her greatly. I cannot give her up in this way. I mean to know the truth, and will compel the Rajah to speak."

"Ah! me— This woman will certainly bring you to your death. Have you not lost your position through her? Have you not already been nearly killed on her account? Am I no longer of any consequence to you? Will you consider neither the pain nor the anxiety you cause me? Ah! that miserable Nana. Why did she write to you and disturb you? You wish to speak to the Rajah, do you? Very well, then, I will see this Nana. For years I have tried to forget her, but she, it seems, wishes me to remember. So be it, then. I am going to her, and in the presence of this d'Albigny, I will tear off her mask and denounce her! And you, Lucien, if you take my advice, you will write at once to Mademoiselle Naviel to give her back her promise. You, of course, will tell her why. If she be guilty, she will make no attempt to prove the contrary; if she is innocent and really loves you, she can easily exculpate herself. You have a right to ask from her an undivided

heart, you, whose youth has been so discreet. If any woman wishes to deceive you, it is your mother, my boy, who will unmask her perfidy. You will never find another woman, however, who will show you the fidelity of your poor mother. A mother, remember, never thinks of herself when she loves her child."

"You think I had best write to Andrée, then?"

"Unquestionably."

"But if I release her from her promise, and she is in the right, she will resent my suspicions to such a degree that she will entrench herself in haughty silence, and all will be over between us."

"So much the better."

"You do not love Andrée."

"Because I think you love her too much!"

"One cannot love a good woman too much!"

"One can never forget a despicable woman too soon."

"And if I am mistaken?"

"Do as you will, but come to some decision at once. Renounce Andrée or marry her, whichever you think best."

"I will write to her."

He had not time to reflect that this letter, written on the girl's fête day, was a graver offence than if sent her at any other time, and far more grievous than the doubts he had expressed the day of the fire, when Andrée would have perished but for the Rajah.

He wrote the first lines with studied coldness, and without having quite decided to send the letter, but as he went on, the putting of his emotion into words exasperated him, and caused him to write sentences which fell heavily on his own heart.

When his letter was completed, he placed it with the one from Nana in an envelope, and wrote Andrée's address.

Madame Despretz had made her toilette meanwhile, and was ready to go out before Lucien was. She went to say good-bye to him.

"Are you really going to see that woman?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And why? What is the use?"

"I wish to have a verbal explanation with her, and implore her to leave us in peace."

Then, seeing Lucien's letter addressed to Mademoiselle Naviel, she said:

"Your letter is ready, is it? I congratulate you! Now, you belong to me once more, and only to me! I will put it in the box if you wish."

Lucien did not refuse.

It was long since he had seen a ray of joy on the worn features of his mother. She threw her arms around her son's neck and kissed him on his brow and on his eyelids. "We shall be happy once more; we two will love each other as we once did. Let the Rajah alone, it will do no good, and Andrée will merely think that you regret her. I will mail your letter, or, perhaps, I had best give it to the *concierge* at the Naviels myself."

"Put it in the post, mother."

"As you choose."

She started off with a far lighter step than usual. He dressed hastily and went out shortly after his mother.

Where was he going? He did not know himself. Suddenly he thought of the letter he had just written, and stopped as abruptly as if he had received a blow on the head. This letter would separate him from Andrée forever. He remembered certain expressions he had used, which to the girl would seem little else than insults.

Why had his mother given him no time for deliberation? As he thought of the future, the long stretch of years unbrightened by her presence, he felt that he could not endure them, that life would be intolerable without Andrée.

He remembered her as he had first seen her, in the loge at the Bouffes, in all the beauty of her fifteen years, sweet and simple, unmoved by the enthusiasm which Nana had aroused in this crowd of reckless men, who saluted in her not so much Nana's daughter, as pure and innocent girlhood.

How pretty she was that night in her lilac robe, with gloves which, coming to her elbow, covered the dimpled beauty of her girlish arms. Her hair was in soft puffs, and fell in front over her low Greek brow.

He saw her again as she looked that spring morning, when he first spoke to her of love.

Detail after detail of that walk, which he had then unconsciously noticed, rose before him. He remembered the gentleman who looked like a *Chef de Bureau*, who sat reading his newspaper on the balcony, in his dressing gown.

He remembered, also, how, as they passed the *Château d'Eau*, a little girl had offered him a bunch of Persian lilacs. Even this small incident appeared clearly before him, while at the moment he had scarce heeded it. Why had it returned to him now, after so long a period of forgetfulness?

In his vague retrospective dream, the perfume of the lilacs, which in color just matched Andrée's robe, were all confounded.

And now it was finished. The fair vision gave place to one with anxious face and hurried mien. Was it possible? Was he deceived?

His mother did not love Andrée, and that miserable Luke, Nana's lackey, who, of course, was the tool of his employer, even he, declared that the marriage of Andrée with Lucien was absolutely impracticable.

As to the woman whose letter was the cause of their rupture, her opinion was of no consequence, it was absolutely without weight; and Lucien did not take the trouble to ask himself what her reason might be for writing to him.

Nevertheless, unconsciously swayed by Nana's influence, he had yielded to her bitterness against Andrée, and accorded credence to the calumnies of this unnatural mother upon her own daughter.

Mechanically, he arrived at the *Jardin des Plantes*, all the time revolving these contradictory ideas in his mind. He stopped on the *Quai*, looking, with fixed gaze, on the distant outlines of *Nôtre-Dame*, which rose against a pale blue sky.

Lucien leaned over the parapet of the *Quai*, and looked down on the gliding water, which here spread out to surround the *Ile de la Cité*. It seemed to Andrée's lover that, down by the Island, there were reflections in the water of the hue of Andrée's robe.

Could he live, haunted by all these memories, and not go mad?

No; he would go and see if there were no way of recalling that mad letter. He ran to the station in *la Rue Croisatière*, where he knew his mother must have mailed it. He waited twenty minutes, so crowded was the office, before he could approach the desk. He was too late. The collection had been already made, and the letter had gone to the Central Post-office.

He ran to the *Rue Jean-Jacques-Rousseau*, and made his statement. From thence he was sent to the office of the Department, where he was shown into the *Chef's* private room, and there made to write a *fac-simile* of the address which he had placed on the letter.

He waited there a half hour.

The *Chef* finally informed him that no such letter could be found; and Monsieur Despretz hastened away, without a word of thanks to the excellent functionary. He called a carriage.

"*Square des Batignolles*," he said to the coachman.

The *concierge* at the Naviels' told him that an old lady in black, whom she had often seen before, had given her a letter for Mademoiselle Andrée, and that she had herself taken it up to the young lady as quickly as possible, and added that a few minutes later Mademoiselle Andrée had gone out, without saying where she was going.

The evil was irreparable.

It was clear that the girl was deeply wounded and desperate.

His despair was transformed into jealous rage against the Rajah, against the Marquis, against Nana, and even against his mother.

He rushed down to the carriage again, and, leaping into it like a madman, he called out to the coachman:

"To the *Grand-Hôtel*!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

LETTERS.

THE Rajah was alone in the apartment where Andrée had seen him when she came to solicit his testimony in favor of her father, when he was accused of the robbery at Nana's.

When the girl hastily entered, he saw at once, by the drawn expression of her face, and by its pallor, that some sudden misfortune had overwhelmed her.

"It is Nana," he said. "I recognize her hand. Andrée, you have been weeping. Do you wish this woman to die?"

"I do not wish for the death of any one, Prince. I am horribly calumniated on your account. Read these letters.

He extended his hand.

"I need not read hers," he replied, "for I know only too well what it is. Give me the other from your *fiancé*."

He dropped Nana's letter on the floor while he read Lucien's.

"Poor fellow!" he murmured softly, and, before he finished, silent tears rolled down his bronzed and hollow cheeks. "Poor fellow!" he repeated. "And you have come, I suppose, to ask me not to see you again? I foresaw this."

He gasped for breath, and then continued:

"I was wrong. I see it now. All this is my own fault. I should never have gone near you. I should never have carried you flowers. I am heartily sorry for him—sorry that he should doubt you, the soul of purity. Each flower that I carried to you told, in its own language, that which I dared not say myself."

"I know that you love me, Rajah. Why did I not meet you earlier?"

"Why—yes—why? You would have been my wife then—you would be my very own to-day, instead of receiving letters like this, which break your heart. Poor boy! He suffers, and has written to you words which hurt him as much as they wound you. Do you still love him?"

"Why do you ask me that question?"

"Answer me frankly. Do you love him, in spite of all the sorrow he has cost you. Tell me, Andrée, do you love him?"

Hope glittered in his eyes. The fever of his blood had dried the tears on his cheeks.

He hardly breathed, as he awaited Andrée's reply—his whole frame trembled, as he listened for it. This man, whose very silence uttered his devotion, asked now whether he was to hope and live, or sacrifice himself and die.

"You ask if I love him, Prince," Andrée replied, in a tone of intense feeling. "I love him only too much. I have trampled now on my pride, and come to you to implore you to sacrifice your friendship for me to his unjust suspicions."

"It is well. You will never see me again under your roof. Say farewell for me to your father, to your mother, to all whom you love. I am going away. Perhaps, time may be given me to return to my own land, and die where I was born."

"No, Prince, stay here."

"And why? I hoped to be strong enough, unselfish enough to become a witness of your happiness. I hoped to sleep well under your pale skies, and under the grass of this country. You see how I long for this repose. Why remain, I say, since my presence is the cause of your tears, since you do not love me, and do love him? I have no longer courage to think, still less to live! What can I do to console you?" he continued. "I offer to go away—I offer to die for your sake. From the Land of the Dead one cannot return, and your *fiancé* will not be jealous of a ghost."

As he spoke, he took Andrée's hand in his, while she wept silently, with her forehead on his shoulder.

The tender, respectful words of the Prince touched the girl's heart profoundly, and she felt herself won toward this generous nature, which even Nana had not been able to change.

A whole world of new sentiments awoke within her. She compared what she felt with all the other affections of her life; but there was nothing similar. She had felt a vague sympathy for *Face-à-Claques* when she was a child, and then a tender esteem for Lucien, ripening, as months and years went on, into love of the best character.

And for this girl, to be the first woman whom a man had loved was a great thing; and she was vain enough to believe that he could love none other than herself. Lucien, therefore, had over the Rajah the immense advantage of never having had any other love than Andrée; whereas, the Prince had made himself conspicuous, in the eyes of all Paris, with Nana. He had been seen at the opera with her, at the Bois, and at balls. He had been bankrupted by her once, and would have been financially ruined the second time but for Andrée's appearance in his life.

He at once deserted Nana, and indulged in a romantic affection for Nana's daughter. In the eyes of many women, the idealism of the Rajah would have seemed ridiculous; to Andrée, however, he was perfection.

The salon in the Grand Hôtel where the Prince received Andrée was comfortable, in fact, luxurious, but, of course, had no individuality of decoration. The furniture, covered with blue satin brocaded with yellow, consisted of the conventional number of tables and chairs, of a sofa, and an open desk, covered with open letters and unfinished replies.

"You see," he said, "when I wish to write nowadays, I find it impossible. I have not an idea in my brain. Six months ago they all took flight, and now dwell with you. Say to your *fiancé* that, as he loves you, I leave you to him. If some day you should change, if regret at having lost me should assail you—

But no, it is impossible; it would be too late for you, too late for me. If the time should ever come when I should discover that he made you unhappy, that he took advantage of your goodness to torture you, I should come from the dead; my will would lift the earth from above me, and with my skeleton hand I would snatch him away. If, however, I were living, I would kill him, and bear you away, that I might comfort you. We would go far, far away, toward the land of the Sun—"

"Do not talk in this way, Rajah," she said uneasily, at the same time moving a little way from him. "Were I to listen to you, I should give reason to my enemies for saying evil things of me. We must separate, that is clear. You have been a good friend to me. I have never had the smallest reason to complain of word or act on your part, and am deeply grateful. Write, then, to Lucien Despretz that you have learned from me that he is jealous of your visits, and that, to prove to him that he is wrong, you will cease to visit me. You will also add that you have for me a great affection, but that you have admired Nana too much to feel the same toward any other woman."

"Can it be possible that you, Andrée, wish me to write and sign such falsehoods as these? Lying is base—I cannot lie!"

"You will lie for me: I shall esteem you all the more."

"I will do as you bid me."

"Then write to-night."

"Now, if you desire it. Dictate, and I will write and sign in your presence."

"So be it, Prince, I accept. Those who accuse me must be confounded."

The Rajah threw himself into an arm-chair, which he rolled in front of his desk, and took up a golden pen-handle enriched with gems.

"I am waiting," he said.

She at once, began to dictate:

"*Dear Sir:*

"I learn with extreme surprise that you wish to

break off your marriage with Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel on my account.

"I am quite sure, however, that it is needless to tell you that my relations with your *fiancée* are, and have been, simply those of friendliness and courtesy. Mademoiselle having rendered me a great service at the time of the burning of the Hôtel which belonged to her mother, I wished to meet her occasionally. I had, and have, a very high regard for her, and nothing more. I have felt for her mother a devotion which is not yet extinct, and which will always prevent me from feeling a similar sentiment toward any other woman. I find Mademoiselle Andrée very charming, but I never lifted my eyes to her, as I well knew that she loved another, and also that the other loved her. I wish to offer you, moreover, what in my opinion is an irrefutable proof. If I had for this young lady the admiration with which certain people endow me, I should admit no rival near my throne, and in that case one of us two would be dead ere this.

"Do not, therefore, consider me guilty of cowardice when I tell you that I shall henceforward cease to visit this young lady. I do this, only because I know that she loves you. If it were otherwise, it would be you, who—"

Andrée stopped.

"No," she murmured, "I cannot say this to you. No offence. Go back to — 'I do this only'—wait, I must think a minute. Go on," she said presently.

"Love your *fiancée* as she deserves, and be not jealous of a stranger who, far from being your rival, would be only too glad to be

"Your friend,

"THE RAJAH."

"Now address it."

The Rajah wrote:

"MONSIEUR LUCIEN DESPRETZ—
"*Rue Croisatière*,
"Paris."

"Thanks, Prince; and now, adieu. I will send this to-night and he will receive it to-morrow."

"Are you going already?" cried the Rajah. "Oh! do not speak with such cold indifference. I have sworn to you that I would like this man on your account, and I will do so. Why does this Lucien Despretz hate me?"

A garçon of the Hôtel entered suddenly.

"I did not summon you," said the Rajah.

"I knocked, Prince, and thought I heard you say 'come in,' and I did so. There is a tall young man, sir, outside, who insists on seeing you."

CHAPTER XLVII.

NOTRE-DAME.

WHEN Lucien reached the Grand Hôtel, he asked to be shown at once to the apartments of the Rajah. A waiter whom he met near the entrance said to him:

"I do not know whether the Prince will see you now, as—"

"Go and say to him that I wish to see him on important business."

"What name shall I give, sir?"

"Never mind the name."

The garçon knocked, but receiving no reply he entered the ante-room, Lucien following him.

He heard a man's voice say:

"Why does this Lucien Despretz hate me?"

To whom could this question be addressed except to Andrée?

He recoiled before this evidence, and dared not take another step forward.

Then his anger boiled to the surface, and pushing aside the garçon, who still stood in the doorway, he entered the salon of the Indian Prince.

The Rajah released Andrée's hand, which he held in his own, and tranquilly went forward to meet the young man.

"Who are you?" he said courteously. "It seems to me that I have seen you before."

"I came here, sir, for the proof of a woman's treachery, and I find it."

"Not here, sir; there is no treachery here."

Lucien extended his hand toward Andrée with a gesture of accusation.

"Lucien, you are mistaken!" cried Mademoiselle, darting toward her *fiancé*.

"Mistaken, am I, when I find you in the salon of this gentleman? No, I am not mistaken. I have been, I admit, but the day is over for that. I have been too credulous, stupid, in fact, and you two have undoubtedly laughed at me many times together. But I am not inclined to laugh, I do assure you. The Marquis nearly killed me, and I trust that the Prince will finish the work with as much speed as possible."

"I have no wish to kill you, sir. A man's life is a sacred thing."

"Not so sacred, Prince, as a woman's name."

"Which is not perilled with me, sir—this girl I respect as much as I love."

"You admit her worthlessness, nevertheless?"

"You shall not use that word in relation to me!" cried Andrée. "I ought to hate you after the insults you have heaped upon me. But I have no pride, it seems to me; and, as I am able to exculpate myself, I choose to do so."

Andrée took the letter which she had dictated to the Rajah, and extended it to Monsieur Despretz.

A long silence followed.

Lucien, leaning against the wall near the window, read the letter.

The Rajah, crushed by the thought of losing Andrée, sank into a chair.

Mademoiselle Naviel, standing opposite Lucien, waited for him to recognize his wrongs toward her, and then to admit them.

But, as Lucien read, his countenance assumed a more and more sarcastic expression. Pain and indignation were visible in his face.

When he had finished the letter, he placed it in his pocket, and said to the Prince:

"I congratulate you, sir. The farce has succeeded and the comedy has been well played. I shall keep this letter as a model of duplicity. I congratulate you as well as Mademoiselle."

"I pity you, sir," said the Rajah, "for your inability to distinguish the true from the false."

"You should pity me still more, sir, for my inability to retain the love which was once mine, and of which you have robbed me. One of us must leave this place, sir!"

"Yes—I am going."

"So you say in this letter—but your word is not enough."

"Why these unnecessary insults, young man? My life is nearly at an end. You may strike the Rajah—he will make no attempt to defend himself."

"I do not propose to assassinate you—I wish to meet you on a fair field with seconds."

"I shall not do so, for I have no wish to kill you."

"Kill me if you choose, and the sooner the better. I will compel you to meet me."

"You must live. You are young, you are beloved. It is for me to hate you, but I do not hate you. I wish, on the contrary, that you should live happily with her."

"With me, Prince? No, never! Andrée Naviel is not to be insulted with impunity. This is the second time in three months that this man has wounded me more deeply than tongue can tell. It is too much!"

"I doubt you no longer. Your presence here is a proof."

"So be it, then. I am yours no longer. I am his who knows how to love me—"

"Do not say that, Andrée—in heaven's name, do not say that!" interrupted the Rajah. "You know very well it is not true. You know well that you never will be mine, because you do not love me. Such falsehoods as yours tear the heart."

"I tell you, Rajah, that it is you, not he, who deserve my love. I tell you, Rajah, that I love you now, and that I will never again see this man."

The Prince leaned forward and put his hand on her mouth. He was very pale.

"Hush!" he said gently; "hush!"

"I will leave you," exclaimed Lucien; "but with one word of advice, Mademoiselle. Pray select your

titled adorers better. Neither the Marquis nor the Prince are worthy of you — they are both cowards."

Andrée walked forward, and, standing erect before Lucien, looked at him with her clear and lovely eyes, in whose greenish depths lurked no shadow of pity.

"Leave the room, sir," she said coldly. "The hour will come when you will repent of all that you have said here. You will weep tears of blood in that hour, because I know you love me — and that knowledge gives me strength to punish you for your unworthy suspicions. Leave me now; I have a friend who is kinder and truer than yourself. Go away!"

"I regret, sir," said the Rajah, "that you are unable to believe or to understand me. We might have been friends — for a brief time, at least, for my physicians have given me up. It would be a pity to stake your life—which should be a long and a happy one—against mine, which can be numbered by days, and which is colorless and cold. Come now, sir, give me your hand, the Rajah is loyal. Why do you insist that he is deceiving you? I repeat once more, and for the last time, the simple truth—I love your *fiancée*, but she does not love me."

"You wish to exculpate in my eyes the woman you have admired. You cannot do it."

And Lucien abruptly left the room, and presently found himself on the Boulevard, amid the busy crowd.

The soft spring air, the flowers on the corners, the light toilettes of the women and the coming and going of open carriages, containing ponderous looking people who were talking *bourse* or theatre, went to make up a very gay scene. Lucien crossed the Boulevard and entered *la Rue de la Paix*. From thence he reached *la Place Vendôme*, went down *la Rue Castiglione*, and crossed the gardens of the *Tuileries*.

Under the century-old chestnut trees, groups of children were playing, superintended by nurses in long white aprons.

A military band was playing the overture to *William Tell*, and the shrubbery all over the turf was in bloom.

Flocks of sparrows disputed the crumbs thrown them by shabbily dressed people, whose misanthropy did not seem to intimidate the birds, however. The dark outlines of the half burned Imperial Palace rose like the ghost of a bitter Past beyond the gardens, where spring had flung out its green banner over the ruins.

Lucien hurried over the *Pont Royal*, not knowing where he was going, but goaded onward by a vague wish to escape the Past. The rapid Seine, with its delicious rippling and rustling sound, seemed also to have assumed a new livery in honor of the spring, and on its breast flecked with golden sunshine the velvety green of the trees on the *Quai* were reflected, the long lines fading away in the distance.

He took the street running by the *Quais*, and as he passed *Nôtre-Dame*, he suddenly conceived the idea of entering it.

A supreme consolation awaited him, perhaps, under the vaulted roof. The grand façade peopled by statues, its columns and arches, the high gallery and its ogives, and its rose windows, stood between two colossal towers, crowned by fantastic gargoyles, whose grimacing profiles peered out through the mist rising from the river.

A door was open on the left.

The young man entered among the shadows of the naves where daylight rarely penetrated, and where cold silence reigned, disturbed only by the beadle moving the chairs.

The deep shadows of the organ loft surrounded the entrance, and soft tints from the stained glass windows flooded the church further on, while in the damp chapels, dimly burning lamps watched over the sleepy prayers of some old women, who, with half closed eyes, repeated Latin words without in the least understanding them.

Slowly, a peaceful calm fell on the soul of the young man. The odor of incense soothed him, and he felt the vague devotion of a child. He advanced toward

the choir when he was stopped by a Swiss, who said to him:

"If you wish to make the tour of the church, sir, it is a franc."

Lucien was indignant at the system which changed this magnificent church to a shop, the servants attached to the church to vulgar exhibitors of curiosities, and the grand cathedral to a booth of relics at a fair.

The brief alleviation, afforded him by the tranquil shadows of the church, was dissipated. He went away and soon found himself near the Morgue. His depression increased.

"What is the use of living?" he said to himself; "it seems to me that it were far better to lie cold and still on one of these marble slabs!"

And, leaning over the parapet of the *Quai*, he mutely questioned the rippling waters below.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE MEETING OF TWO WOMEN.

JUST as her son entered the presence of the Rajah, Madame Despretz rang at Nana's door. Luke opened it.

He did not appear to recognize Lucien's mother, and as he showed her into the salon he said:

"Whom shall I announce, Madame?"

"Adèle Despretz," was the cold reply.

"Deuce take it all!" he muttered, as he went to notify Nana. "What on earth can she want here? She is quite capable of saying to my worthy employer that I, her servant, should be dismissed from this house at once. But I do not choose to go. I have not finished with these people yet."

He knocked at Nana's door.

Virginie was dressing the hair of her mistress.

"Who wishes to see me, did you say?"

"A lady — Adèle Despretz — I informed her that Madame was very much engaged, and could not see her."

"On the contrary—show her in."

Luke, whose manners and costume were both irreproachable, preceded Madame Despretz to show her in.

Nana's new sleeping room was furnished with low, cushioned chairs, covered with black satin; with an upright piano, over which was a Louis Quinze mirror; a table of black pear wood, and in a corner an ebony bed, very simple in form, under a canopy of yellow bordered with black. The *portières* of the room and the curtains matched the canopy of the bed.

The wardrobe, with mirrors of bevelled glass, stood opposite the bed near the window. The chimney, with its mirror and its bronzes, was fronting the piano. Near the piano was a door leading into a dressing-room

hung with rose-colored Crétonne, which opened also on the vestibule.

Nana was seated before the mirror in the wardrobe when Adèle entered.

Virginie was braiding Madame's hair, a portion of which still fell over the peignoir of black satin, the dark ground showing up its golden lights and shadows.

"Take a chair, Madame," she said to Lucien's mother, and, with a haughty air, she added: "Explain, if you please, why you wished to see me."

"The explanation, Madame, must be between yourself and me."

"Virginie, child, make haste and leave us. In five minutes, Madame, I am at your service."

Virginie finished braiding Nana's hair, and left it hanging in two heavy braids down her back.

"I can finish Madame's toilet later," said the woman. And as she disappeared behind the *portière*, she darted one piercing glance at Madame Despretz.

"Now we can talk," said Nana.

"I have heard much of you, but I have never really seen you before," answered Madame Despretz, "and I now understand that I might easily have been deserted for you. And yet I was beautiful once. Sorrow has made me what you see me—an old woman."

"Who deserted you on my account?"

"The man with whom you went into the country."

"No! Is that really so? How d'Albigny will laugh when I tell him! Well, Madame, I don't think you had much to regret. Do you know what became of that interesting personage?"

At this moment the door into the corridor opened softly, and Luke's pale face appeared under the yellow *portière*.

"Did you ask, Madame, if I knew what had become of him?" asked Lucien's mother.

"Did you ring, Madame?" inquired Luke at the same moment.

"No, I did not. And do not disturb us again; do you not see that we are busy."

"Excuse me, Madame," was the meek reply, "shall I arrange your window?" And, without waiting for an assent from his mistress, Luke entered and closed a blind. As he passed Adèle Despretz, he whispered in her ear:

"Silence and caution. Remember that you must protect the good name of your son."

"As to the man of whom I robbed you," continued Nana, "he turned out very badly. He stole from me; he was sent to prison, but succeeded in escaping conviction, I am sure I cannot tell how. For ten years I lost sight of him, and then one day I suddenly encountered him at a fair at Saint Cloud. He was an out-and-out scoundrel, without one redeeming point, and I am truly thankful to have heard no more of him in all this time."

Luke closed the door, but instead of leaving the room, he remained hidden behind the yellow *portière*, which touched the floor.

Neither of the two women supposed for a moment that he was within hearing.

"Now, Madame," resumed Nana, "I do not believe that you came here to evoke a remembrance which is most disagreeable to me, and which is not flattering to either of us. The fact is you have lived a life of honest mediocrity, because you have been faithful to this man. I would lay any wager that, if you had your life to live over again, you—But the truth is," added Nana, "I do not repent of what I have done, and I regret only that it must all come to an end. The moral of it all is, you see, that a woman must not allow herself to be admired by a poor man. You agree with me, I presume?"

"No, Madame, I do not."

"Indeed! Then I confess I am at a loss to understand you!"

"A woman's affection is above all price, and there is no more enviable position than that of a happy wife and mother. But if a poor girl suffer, the only possible excuse is that she was not mercenary."

"Yes, but suppose after this you should be deserted, what is left for you then?"

"Work and an honorable independence, Madame."

"But you could not make money enough to provide you with food—and if there were a child?"

"The poor mother must work all the harder while he is young; but when the child grows up, educated as he has been in the school of poverty, then it becomes his turn to take care of his mother. I did as much for my son, Madame; now he supplies all my wants. It is for him, Madame, that I come to ask mercy; he loves your daughter—why interfere with their marriage?"

"Then you are the mother of the fellow who insulted me?"

"He is young, he is madly in love with Andrée—and in revenging yourself on one child you punish two, for Andrée loves my son."

"A mere momentary caprice, my dear; she will soon get over it. You need not think she loves him as much as she says. At your age I should not suppose you would be very romantic, and you really ought to side with me against these two children, although I shall have no difficulty in preventing this marriage by myself. Nana's daughter must not marry."

"Alas! I fear your course in calumniating your child in order to disgust my son, will only augment their love and lead to some catastrophe. Had you seen him when he received your letter! Let them marry, I implore you. Let them lead quiet, peaceful, and respectable lives. I have not much faith, Madame, in happiness, but it may be that there is such a thing; and, if so, it is to be found in a domestic life, rather than in this one like yours. Remember, Madame, that most women who live like you do their best to keep their daughters in ignorance of the fact, and send them out of reach of all evil influences. Do like them. My son is honest and true. Give Andrée to him; he will watch over and guard her from every evil. I assure you that I am in deadly terror of some mad act on his part. I beg of you not to further trouble

the peace of these young creatures. Notwithstanding your letter, I wish to believe in your daughter, and to respect her as the wife of my son."

"Tut! Tut! This is all nonsense! I repeat to you that this little simpleton must not marry. I have other views for her, and I will never give my consent to this preposterous union."

"Very well, then. I will simply observe that Andrée owes no consideration nor obedience to the mother who deliberately handed her over to public charity."

"If Andrée does not obey me, I have means to compel her."

"You will be the cause of her death."

"What of that? I had rather see her dead than living in squalid poverty."

"But my son is doing very well, Madame, and your daughter far more than earns her bread."

"That may be, but I wish her to do far more than that. I wish to see her admired by men of rank and position, and not by salaried clerks."

"I see that my mission has not been in any degree successful. There is justice above, Madame, and I assure you that your bitterness against honest and industrious people will be some day punished, and your pride will be abased. Already your ruin and that of the Marquis d'Albigny has begun. Old age will soon be upon you, for though you conceal your gray hairs and your wrinkles with amazing skill, I can yet see them. You will soon learn the value of the professions of those about you."

"I think, Madame, as we seem to have nothing more that is agreeable to say to each other, and as I wish to speak to the Marquis d'Albigny, I will beg you to excuse me."

She leaned forward and rang the bell. The door immediately opened and shut again, and Luke came forward.

"Say to the Marquis that I wish to see him at once," said Nana.

Luke bowed.

Madame Despretz rose and said with dignified sadness: "I yield my place to him, Madame."

She went out, followed by Luke, who walked down the stairs at her side.

When they were alone, Luke, addressing Madame Despretz, said:

"Put a stop to this marriage, Adèle. Nana is right. You know that Andrée and Lucien are —"

"I know what I know. The children wish to marry. They love each other."

"I do not understand you, Adèle."

"I dare say; but I do not require your approbation. Believe me, it is better for you not to meddle with this affair. If you do, I will reveal at once to this household whom you are."

"I have done all I could. I shall say no more. I have no fault to find with you, Adèle, while toward you I have acted miserably. If you forgive me, you will, indeed, be merciful. Listen to me a moment. Tell no one who I am. I will punish the woman who made you suffer and the man who assaulted your son."

"If you do both these things, I will forgive you." And, for the first time, she extended her hand. He held it with a firm, close pressure for a moment, and turned away, with a profound sigh.

Then he rang at the door of the Marquis.

Madame Despretz was at the foot of the stairs when d'Albigny opened his door.

His face was covered with lather, and in his hand was a razor.

"Madame wishes to speak to you, sir," said Luke.

"Very good. Tell her I will be there in five minutes."

Luke remounted the stairs, four at a time.

"What does she want of the Marquis, I wonder?" he said to himself. "I am certain that it is about Andrée. There is some mischief going on between Nana and the Marquis. They have taken a hôtel, newly organized the household, and now they are devising a scheme to attract people here. I shall keep my ears and eyes open, and mar this little game."

He returned to Nana's door, which he had left open.

"Madame will receive a visit from the Marquis in five minutes," he said, respectfully.

"Very good."

Luke waited in the ante-room until d'Albigny came, and, when he was admitted to Nana's room, the lackey opened the door noiselessly, and glided behind the yellow curtain.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A DISCOVERY.

WHEN Nana was alone, after the departure of Madame Despretz, a sudden idea struck her.

"Good Heavens!" she exclaimed, "may it not be that Andrée and Lucien are children of the same father. If this is so, then everything becomes easy to me." Exhilarated by this discovery, she laughed aloud, as she rose from her chair, and stood before the mirror. Her head was a little thrown back, supported on her plump, white hands, while the two long braids of fair hair fell nearly to the floor.

The Marquis surprised her in this pose.

"Rehearsing?" he asked, sarcastically.

"Yes; I am testing my strength."

"You sent for me. Was it to witness your efforts?"

"It was for the benefit of your advice and experience."

"Speak! I listen."

"Do you know who left here just now?"

"Not in the least."

"Madame Adèle Despretz."

"And who is she? Is she young?"

"By no means. Her hair is white. She must be sixty years of age, at least."

"Oh! Then she is not the person I once knew."

"Did you ever know an Adèle Despretz?"

"Yes; she was an old acquaintance of mine. In fact, I am rather ashamed of having associated with her, and I never made any attempt at seeing her again, as I was afraid that I might be seriously disturbed."

"Upon my word, your mystery is quite interesting. Tell me the whole story."

"And why? No—no—tell me why you sent for me."

"I will tell you in a very few words. This Adèle Despretz is the mother of Lucien Despretz, to whom Andrée is engaged. If her story is true in all its details, Lucien and Andrée are children of the same father."

"That is odd, upon my word!"

"Is it not? At all events, it clears up our difficulties."

"Yes; it looks to me now as if Fortune would smile once more upon us. Since yesterday, Nana, I have accomplished much. I have signed the lease of your hôtel, interviewed the upholsterers, and done much else beside. I intend to have a card-room like the old one—green and gold, the colors of the Empire. It will bring you good luck. Before a month we will have a house-warming that will set all Paris talking. I have sent to England for the horses and coachmen. We shall have eight horses, two of which shall be for the saddle. I will take it on myself to organize your household and bring people to your fêtes. It will be for you, Nana, to keep them after I get them to you. But, of course, I can't do everything—even the intellect of d'Albigny has its limits."

He laughed his short, peculiar laugh.

"Very good, Marquis; you will see Nana again in all her old glory. Nana is dying in this mediocrity, and with all these petty surroundings. We will have one year more of life, at least, Marquis."

"No; hardly a year; six months at the outside, unless—"

"Six months?"

"Yes. You understand, of course, that the rent of the hôtel, the furniture, the stables, your toilettes, and the fêtes that must be given will swallow up at least three hundred thousand francs, and only about one hundred thousand will remain. If the chances of the gaming-table favor us, we shall go on swimmingly; if not, we shall get deeper and deeper in debt. The greatest skill will be required in order to retard as much as possible the inevitable end—inevitable, that

is unless a Rajah tumbles down upon us from the sky, or Andrée returns to us, which I greatly doubt, after the manner in which she received you the other day."

"By the way, tell me the story about that Adèle Despretz, of which you were speaking a little while ago."

"As I told you," d'Albigny replied, "it is not an affair on which I like to dwell. Let me see how I can tell it to you. I could not have been more than twenty-two. I was a good-looking young fellow, and did most things well—spending money freely. I was an orphan, without a tie in the world; and one day I happened to see, in a glove-shop, in the *Passage de l'Opéra*, an adorable-looking girl. She was a blond, with black eyes, or, rather, eyes of a deep, intense blue; features delicately cut, and dainty beyond words. I entered the shop, and asked the girl to show me some gloves, and discovered, in the course of conversation, that her day was over at ten o'clock in the evening. That same evening I was in front of the shop at ten minutes of ten. At that hour a *garçon* put up the shutters, and immediately afterward I saw the little woman, simply but exquisitely dressed, come out. She had that indefinable charm of a Parisian born, and —"

"Pray, Marquis, do not repeat the description you have just given me," interrupted Nana.

"I beg your pardon. At all events, I approached her, and asked permission to take her home. She recognized me, but passed on without replying. I followed, and renewed my proposition.

"'If I should accept,' she replied, maliciously, 'you would be well punished.'

"'And why?'

"'Because I live at Asnières.'

"I replied, gayly, that I did not care if she lived at the North Pole, if I might be allowed to accompany her there.

"I asked the name of her parents, for she said she lived with them, and also her own name."

"Excuse me, Marquis, if I interrupt you, but I

should be glad to see our new Hôtel before dinner; will you go with me?"

"Most certainly."

"Then I will ring for Virginie."

"No; put on your new spring bonnet, and you will be charming."

"Very good. Go on with your story, while I dress."

"Where was I? Ah! near the *Saint-Lazare* station. I took two tickets, and we reached Asnières at quarter past eleven, when I took the return train, having obtained permission to call for her every evening. But this availed me little; she wished to marry, and was not disposed to trifle. I formed a plan which was worthy of a schemer, and after a month of this sort of thing, I one evening had a carriage in waiting, and fairly forced Adèle into it, telling the coachman to drive to Asnières. The end of all this you may imagine. I do not care to tell it. I have never seen the girl since, for it was an adventure worthy of punishment."

"Probably she never told of it."

"I presume not. I made cautious inquiries and discovered that about a month after I saw her she had left the roof of her parents, and that later she had a child. But I never heard whether this child was a girl or a boy. And now that I have told you this, I should also say that if ever you should repeat it, and use this confidence against me, I should at once say that I invented it on the spur of the moment."

"You have nothing to fear from me, Marquis. It is probable that the girl you speak of utterly disappeared, and, after the portrait you have given me of your Adèle Despretz, I see that she has nothing in common with mine, who is sixty if she is a day. It is a great pity to grow old, but I think it would be an excellent idea to kill off all the ugly old women."

As she developed this humane theory, Nana entered her dressing room, and taking up a flacon of green crystal, poured some of its contents on her delicate handkerchief, embroidered with a huge coronet.

"Come here, Marquis," she said, "and I will give you some of my delicious perfume."

The Marquis obeyed.

She threw some of this violet perfume on the coat and handkerchief of the Marquis, and then they both went down the stairs together. In twenty seconds more the sound of their footsteps ceased. Then the yellow curtains were drawn aside, and the tall, thin form of Luke appeared in the doorway.

His expression was one of tragic earnestness.

He looked about the room, and threw up the windows.

"Let us get rid of this vile odor," he muttered.

CHAPTER L.

ANDRÉE'S FAREWELL.

"ADIEU, Prince," said Andrée to the Rajah, when Lucien Despretz had gone.

She extended her hand to him with cold dignity.

"All is over between us, then?" he asked.

"Unquestionably."

"We shall never meet again?"

"Probably not."

She went away without looking back, and he stood gazing after her in the embrasure of the window, with his arms closely folded upon his breast. Andrée took the sidewalk which passed in front of the Grand Opera, and turned to the left to reach *la Chaussée-d'Antin*.

She walked very fast, almost without knowing it. It seemed to her that she was no longer of the earth, and that between her and all other human beings there was now no bond of sympathy. In front of Trinity she saw children lying on the turf, while their mothers sewed, and pigeons flew from tree to tree with a soft, cooing sound. The church was hung with white—a white bier covered with flowers was followed by a long procession of women in deep mourning. Andrée stopped to look on. A strange impression had assailed her. It seemed to her that it was her own body lying under all those spring flowers. When the procession had been swallowed up in the darkness beyond the portal, Andrée resumed her hurried walk toward *Batignolles*. When she reached the house, she found her mother very anxious about her. No one asked a question, but all tried to conceal their amazement at finding her so calm. She went to her work and sat still until evening, hardly speaking a word.

Madame Naviel said once under her breath:

"It is very odd that Lucien has not come."

Andrée replied with a singular laugh:

"Yes, mother, it is odd, very odd, indeed."

After dinner, as there was no pressing work, the Naviels went to their own salon, and the work-women to their attic.

Andrée remained for some time in the salon, lying on the sofa. She was utterly worn out. A torpor had dulled all her senses. All around her were flowers. She wished she could die thus. And why should she not? What had life and she to do with one another?

Without any fixed intention of committing suicide at once, she felt a certain vague desire to experiment in that direction. She took all the flowers which had been sent to her, and piled them on her bed. Orange flowers, roses and violets were mingled with the bunches of lilacs brought to her the evening previous by her work-women. She had untied the bouquets, thinking that the flowers would keep better loosened.

She closed the door, stuffed the chimney, intercepted every possible crevice which could admit a breath of air from without, and then she opened her wardrobe. Her wedding dress lay there, carefully folded in paper. She spread it out upon the chair, and then seated herself in front of her mirror and dressed her hair, allowing its wavy tresses to fall unconfined to her knees. Then she placed the wreath of orange blossoms on her head. She was so pretty thus that a faint smile parted her lips. Her head ached acutely, and, compressing her lips with the pain, she took off her walking dress and short cotton skirt, exchanged her thread stockings for open work silk ones, and her ordinary underclothing for articles of exquisite fineness. Over a long embroidered skirt she put on her dress, which was of white faille with a long train, and then stood and looked for some time in the mirror. She reminded herself of Marguerite in the opera of *Faust*, or of Ophelia. Turning to her table, she wrote Lucien's address on an envelope, and began a letter to him as follows:

"My Friend: You have almost killed me. I now

complete your work. I have no wish to live, now that the hope I indulged of sharing my life with you is ended. I had no idea that I loved you so much. Why, Lucien, could you not have had faith in me? I have been true to you and always sincere in my dealings with you. It seems to me now, as I look back, that there has not been one hour of my life in which you have had no share. I remember the first time I saw you. I remember the day you went with me to the station, when for the first time you spoke to me of love. Since then, months and years have elapsed; every day of that time I have learned to love you better. And you, Lucien, was it not the same with you?

"You have never known, dear, how much I have loved you. I would gladly have cut off my hair and spread it on the ground as a carpet for you to walk upon. I am not proud now, as you have seen me. My eyes are no longer cold and reproachful. I am about to die. Shall I suffer in dying? I hope not, for life has been to me agony enough.

"I have put on my bridal dress and wreath, for I want to be beautiful in death. I wish you could see me now, as you would have seen me on that happy day which you have chosen to throw away.

"Why did you listen to calumnies? You found me at the Rajah's, and at once informed me that I had no right to be there; but your letter had driven me mad, and, scarce knowing what I did, I hastened to the Prince to implore him never to come to my parents' house again, and to see me no more.

"I was bidding him farewell when you came. He had asked me to become his wife, and promised to make me rich, but I refused for your sake. When I saw you, I was too much surprised to justify myself. Then, too, you would not have believed me.

"This is why, Lucien, I write to you for the last time, that you may know the truth. I have placed all my flowers on the bed; they shall be my winding sheet.

"Ask my parents to forgive me, and bury me as I

lie, in my bridal dress, and to kiss me tenderly before they lay me in my coffin.

"I hardly know what I am writing, my ideas are all in confusion; there is a strange sound in my ears.

"Adieu, my Lucien!—my beloved, adieu!"

Deadly faint, she dragged herself to her bed and lay down. The orange blossoms and violets sent by the Rajah lay around her face; branches of lilacs were heaped upon her breast, while her face was half covered with Lucien's white roses. Her breath came shorter and shorter—her eyelids closed. She dreamed that she was happy and rich; that she was married to Lucien, and that they lived in a house situated in the centre of a forest. Every trivial detail of their courtship arose before her. She could see the level rays of the setting sun coming in between the trunks of the trees and reflected in a lake in the distance. She stood with him under the massive oaks, and breathed the delicious odor of dwarf moss and lichens. She felt his kisses on her lips, and lost all consciousness. The last sound she heard was the clock of *Sainte-Marie* striking four.

The lamp went out, and soon afterward a pale light came in at the windows and touched the girl's fair brow as she lay among the roses. On the pale face was an expression of absolute serenity, and on the parted lips was a smile of irrepressible joy. Her right hand still clasped her white roses; her left hand lay with extended fingers on her breast.

The clock of *Sainte-Marie des Batignolles* struck six just as there was a loud ring at the door of the Naviels.

CHAPTER LI.

LUCIEN'S DISCOURAGEMENT.

LEANING over the parapet by the Morgue, Lucien Despretz waited for night to come. He stood there unconscious of aught but his own sorrows. Andrée's last words, those of the Rajah—the letter written by the Prince and every detail of the scene at the Grand Hôtel came up before him again and again, and he gradually awakened to the consciousness that he had been guilty of an injustice which his whole existence could never expiate. Remorse gnawed at his heart-strings — remorse, which at first dull, soon became acute. He knew finally that he had set his heel on his own happiness and ground it to ashes, and with it the name and the pride of the woman who loved him.

He suddenly turned and retraced his steps again, passing Nôtre Dame, and finally reached *la Rue de Rivoli.*

An hour later he was at *Batignolles.*

He rushed to throw himself at Andrée's feet, implore her pardon for his unjust suspicions, and beg her to consent to an absolute and final reconciliation.

He entered the house, and asked the *concierge* if Mademoiselle had come in.

"Yes, indeed, long ago," was the answer. "You can go up; you will find her there."

"I will be back," was the unexpected reply. And Lucien fled like the wind. When he reached the *Parc Monceaux*, which was still open, he seated himself on a bench.

"You can go up!" These words had struck terror to his soul. Five short flights of stairs alone had separated him from her whom he had so cruelly wounded.

No—she would never forgive him.

If he returned to present himself before her—it mattered little how humble and repentant he might be—Andrée would certainly not forgive him. He felt himself to be too great a coward to face her resentment, and wished to hug a little longer the hope of forgiveness.

When the *Parc Monceaux* was closed, he wandered toward the Square again, and when he reached *la Rue de Rome* he followed the railroad track until he reached a spot from which he knew he could see Mademoiselle Naviel's window. The window was lighted, although it was still early. Andrée was not in the habit of retiring until much later.

She might be ill—and his heart nearly stopped beating at this supposition. He even said to himself: "Perhaps she is dead!"

Then he enumerated different methods of committing suicide, if he should discover that a separation from Andrée was inevitable.

The means were near at hand. He could jump from the bridge, and choose a moment when the passage of a train would enable him to throw himself under a locomotive. A death like that must necessarily be prompt.

He went down toward the railway station, entered a café, asked for a glass of beer and some letter paper.

He wrote a few words to his mother, announcing his intention and requesting her to inform the Naviels.

About midnight he went back to the spot from which he could see Andrée's window, in which the light was still burning. It was plain that something unusual was going on in this room where all his hopes centred.

He wandered up and down the street, with his eyes fixed on this window. Toward morning the light was extinguished, and with it his fear lest Andrée was dead vanished also.

The morning trains now came whistling into the station. The locomotives, with their lanterns still burning, whizzed past, enveloped in a thick smoke.

Now that Lucien was relieved, he trembled lest

Andrée was in danger of death. It must be that she was ill, and that her mother had been watching with her all night; this explained the unusual light. He struggled with himself as long as he could, and finally determined that he would bear this suspense until six o'clock. Just before that hour he hurried over the rail road bridge and ran to Andrée's door. The lower one was open; evidently Monsieur Naviel had gone. Lucien entered, without stopping at the loge of the *concierge*. On each floor he stopped to get his breath, for his heart seemed to be in his throat and nearly choked him.

When he reached the fifth floor he looked with absolute terror at the bell. How often he had pulled it, and with what joyous impatience in his heart.

He listened a moment. The work-women had not yet come down. He heard only the heavy step of Madame Naviel moving about in the kitchen, and the rattle of the spoons and the china she was arranging. Nothing unusual seemed going on, and this apparent peace gave him a brief courage.

He rang. Madame Naviel opened the door, and said, with evident surprise but very cordially:

"You are early!"

Andrée then had not revealed to them anything that had taken place at the Grand Hôtel. This silence indicated some secret resolution on her part.

He entered, saying:

"I am anxious to see Mademoiselle Naviel for a moment."

"She is not yet up—lazy girl. You can wait for her in the salon."

As he entered the room he noticed that the flowers were not there.

He turned to Madame Naviel.

"Where are her bouquets?" he asked.

"I can't imagine—in her room, I suppose. But it was an odd thing for her to do."

As she spoke she tried to open the girl's door, which, contrary to her usual habit, Andrée had fastened with a bolt.

"Andrée! Andrée!" called her mother.

There was no reply.

The young man felt a horrible conviction of the truth. He threw himself against the door; the bolt yielded. Andrée in her bridal dress, white as a waxen Madonna, lay before him, buried in her flowers.

An open letter and an envelope addressed to Lucien, lay on the table.

He understood it all, and, snatching the letter, took it to the window, while Madame Naviel threw herself on Andrée, with wild sobs and cries.

"Take away those flowers!" she said presently, "and do not come back again just yet. Call Margot. I must undress her, and you go for a physician!"

Lucien gathered up all the flowers in his arms, threw them into the workroom, and rushed up the attic stairs. Madame Naviel hurriedly took off Andrée's dress and loosened her corsets. She lifted her on pillows, and was bathing her temples in cold water when Lucien returned.

Margot came in with cries of despair, and she and Lucien began to rub the girl's white hands with the hope of restoring the circulation.

"The physician! Where is he? Why does he not come?" exclaimed Madame Naviel. "Go again for him, Margot!"

Margot obeyed. Lucien began to feel a ray of hope. It was clear that Andrée was not dead, for her lips were still red. He took a hand-glass from the table and held it to those lovely lips, still parted with their sweet smile. At the end of a few seconds he took away the mirror—it was tarnished.

"She is living," he murmured.

The fresh morning air coming in at the wide open window blew in the curtains. He put one arm around her, and, lifting her, supported her head on his shoulder. She sighed faintly, and moved her lips. Five minutes later she opened her large astonished eyes. She saw Lucien, recognized him, and sighed:

"Lucien!—my Lucien—"

The faint voice expired on her lips, but her respiration became more regular, and her feeble pulse grew stronger, while on her cheeks came a faint color. She raised her right arm with a groan.

"Are you in pain?" asked her mother.

"Yes; in terrible pain," was the reply.

"Where, my beloved?" whispered Lucien.

"In my head," she murmured.

Margot appeared with the physician—the same who had been called in the day of the accident on the *Champs-Elysées*.

He listened to what Madame Naviel said, and when she ceased speaking, he grumbled: "Yes, that is just it—romantic, excitable nature. A dreadful temperament to deal with. It is intoxication rather than asphyxia. What were the flowers?"

"Lilacs, orange blossoms, violets and roses."

"Upon my word, I wonder she is not dead. But I believe there is a Providence that watches over lovers."

He took her wrist and counted her pulse.

"Well! she won't die this time," he said. "Give me some paper, pen and ink, and I will write a prescription."

Lucien offered the doctor the quire of paper on which Andrée had written her letter of farewell.

At this moment Andrée turned her head.

"Am I going to die, Doctor?"

"No, my child, not if you obey me, and take what I order."

He rose as he spoke, and, with a bow to the persons in the room, retired.

Madame Naviel went down stairs with him.

Lucien fell on his knees at the side of Andrée's bed. His hot tears fell on the hand which the young girl allowed him to take.

"Andrée," he stammered, "Andrée, will you ever forgive me?"

Her soft eyes filled with tears.

"Read my letter, and you will see that I have forgiven you.—Oh! Where are my lovely white roses?"

"Far away from here. I shall never give you any more."

"Oh! yes, you will, but I will promise you never to sleep in the room with them again."

"I, too, Andrée, thought of dying. I could not live without you."

He took from his pocket the letter he had written at the café near the station.

"Read it, and you will see what I said to my poor, dear mother. What would she have thought if I had never gone home to her again? I have spent the whole night wandering about the streets and watching the light in your window. I knew there was something wrong here. Oh! what a night it has been! We have both been a little mad, I believe."

Madame Naviel now returned to the room, followed by Margot, whom she had sent to the druggist's with the prescription.

The door bell rang at this moment. Lucien went to open it and found himself face to face with his mother.

"Do you wish to kill me, Lucien?" she asked coldly.

He put both arms around her neck, and kissed her on her soft, white hair.

"You love me a little, do you, then?"

"If I did not love you, I should not be alive now," he answered with an unconscious falsehood.

"And Andrée," asked his mother, "where is she?"

"In her room. She wished to die, and is very ill."

"Poor girl! Let me see her."

Madame Naviel now appeared.

"Come in, Madame Despretz," she said; "our two young lovers give us a great deal of anxiety."

The two ladies crossed the salon to a secluded room. Lucien followed them.

The girl's face was flushed. She complained of headache and of great heat. All day her friends watched over her with tender anxiety. Margot brought her medicines, and Lucien gave them to her.

Toward evening, Andrée declared that she felt much better, and Margot went up to her attic to rest, for she had been all day on her feet.

When she entered her narrow quarters, she closed the door and locked it; then, going to her bed, she lifted the mattress, and ripped a small place in the side. Her small, glittering eyes sparkled with a cruel joy. A yellow light fell from the high and narrow windows on her thin face, and brow covered with brown freckles.

Her hair, which she had had no time to comb, was disordered and rough.

She drew from her bosom a flat bottle containing a brown liquid. She spelled out the label, and shivered a little, as she muttered:

"Yes, that will do."

Then she hid the vial in the mattress.

CHAPTER LII.

A NEW START.

SOME days later, Nana and the Marquis were established on the avenue *Friedland*, in a small hôtel, entirely new and very elegant. The stables were on the left, and above them a hot-house.

The *rez-de-chaussée* was reached by a double flight of six steps. The hall was paved with marble, and hung with pictures and statues, purchased at the last salon. On the right was a *Salle d'Armes*, hung with a selection of modern weapons and antique armor. On the left was the card-room of green and gold, and back of this the library, furnished in old oak.

On the first floor was the dining-room, in ebony, inlaid with silver, and the drawing-room which communicated with the conservatory, while between the dining-room and *salon* was a small boudoir.

The sleeping and bath-rooms were on the next floor, and, above, ample accommodations for the servants.

In three days Nana was entirely settled. Luke was now the *valet* of the Marquis. Virginie still remained Madame's *femme de chambre*. There was a *chef*, with two assistants; a coachman and footman, and the *concierge*, who was to assist Luke in rubbing the floors and similar things.

The fourth day, d'Albigny, having had a great run of luck at the club the previous evening, where he won ten thousand francs, happened to meet Mulhausen, who invited him to breakfast at the *Café Anglais*.

As he went out after breakfast, d'Albigny, who had sent his orders to the coachman, drove Mulhausen round the Lake, in a Victoria fresh from Binder, and then insisted on his going home with him to dinner.

The reappearance of the Marquis at the *Bois* with the Prince made a great sensation. He was welcomed

with a salvo of obsequious salutations, to which he responded with considerable haughtiness.

It was a glorious afternoon in May. The trees and turf around the Lake were of the softest, tenderest green. Beautiful toilettes and superb equipages were to be seen in every direction. The iron-clad hoofs of the horses struck firmly on the hard gravel. Silver-mounted harnesses glittered in the sunshine.

White boats, manned by six oars, were on the Lake, darting hither and thither. The water splashed up on the green margin, where groups of scarlet geraniums bloomed in fiery magnificence. Along the shore, in the shade of the larches, sat family groups, contemplating the rich equipages that rolled past.

Sometimes a lady on horseback would emerge from the bridle-paths, with her attendant cavalier, and groom in the rear. Her floating skirt and veil were soon lost in the distance.

The Guards, in their uniforms of green and silver, stood, with folded arms, and watched the lady disappear, and then, with their left hands on the handle of their swords, resumed their slow pacing to and fro.

"Listen to me, Mulhausen," said d'Albigny. "I have decided to profit by my present good luck to try another experiment. The *Bourse* and I do not agree. I propose to make an attempt in a different direction, and to associate you in my plans."

"Let me hear what they are, first, my dear fellow."

"We need a new paper in Paris—a journal that shall be half theatrical and half financial. You may safely invest a hundred thousand francs in this enterprise, which amount is to you, Mulhausen, a mere song. You shall be editor, with a salary of twelve thousand."

"That is not a great deal."

"No; but you will have enormous influence. You will be the favorite of the *Coulisse*, you know, and I prophesy for you an immense success among the pretty actresses. You will have them all at your feet, Prince. Beside that, I propose that a certain column

of our paper shall be devoted to enterprises which—well, I will call them shady if you will."

"Yes, yes—I see. You certainly are a very clever man, d'Albigny. But what part shall you take in this new enterprise?"

"Oh, I shall be General Manager; and, as I understand much better than you, all questions of finance, I shall pay the bills, keep the books, and all that sort of thing."

"But the theatrical part—who will attend to that?"

"Why, you, of course. That is, unless you prefer to give a hundred francs per month to a reporter to get up articles which you will sign."

"But if the journal fails, my hundred thousand francs are lost."

"But, with you and me at the head of it, I see no likelihood of failure. I will undertake to make it thrive on the advertisements alone. If, at the end of a few months, we decide that we are not making money—if, in fact, we only make our expenses, then we will sell out, and you will retire with at least the money you put in."

"Your idea pleases me, and I ask only twenty-four hours for consideration. To-morrow, if I decide in the affirmative, as is more than probable (because, as I tell you frankly, I like the idea), I will hand you over the hundred thousand francs."

"And in one week's time I will have the journal in running order. My printers, clerks, reporters—my whole staff, in fact, are ready to obey a signal from me at this very minute. We will print hand-bills enough to carpet Paris from one end to the other. You will see, my dear Prince, that I know what I am about."

At this moment they reached the end of the Lake. The coachman turned to the Marquis to ask for orders. "Home!" said d'Albigny.

They returned through the *Bois de Boulogne*, both men very silent, slowly smoking the cigars which they had purchased, at two francs each, at the *Café Anglais*.

D'Albigny now changed his tone. After having put

Mulhausen on the scent of this new plan, he affected to hesitate a little as to whether he should allow the co-operation of the Prince. It was out of pure liking for him, and a desire for his companionship, he said, that he had made the proposition; but, if Mulhausen was disposed to hesitate, why, he had only to say so.

Mulhausen sat reflecting on the many advantages which his vanity told him he might reap from such an investment of his spare funds. He would be, at all events, the manager of a newspaper. He would, to be sure, risk a hundred thousand francs, but if failure threatened, he could sell out in time.

As they passed under the *Arc de Triomphe*, he said to the Marquis:

"By the way, d'Albigny, how do you propose to pay the salaries of your *employés?*"

"By the success of the journal," answered the Marquis, confidently.

"If you think six thousand francs would be of use to you in setting the thing in motion, I am quite ready to let you have them. You understand, of course, that, if I go into it, it is not with the idea of making money; it is the influence I want."

"Yes, to be sure, I understand that—the right to see all the stars first, the right to be their prime favorite and minister."

He tossed his cigar away, with a laugh that had in it a tone of bitterness.

The Victoria now drew up before Nana's new hôtel.

The coachman whistled, and the *concierge* opened the gate. The carriage entered the short avenue, went half around the lawn, and stopped once more at the steps.

The Prince jumped out first, rather clumsily, while d'Albigny followed, alighting with juvenile lightness and agility.

Luke opened the glass doors, and the two men entered the vestibule.

D'Albigny showed the Prince the card-room and the

Salle d'Armes; then he took his arm and led him to the salon, saying to Luke as he did so:

"Tell Madame that the Prince de Mulhausen asks if he may pay his respects to her."

Luke ran lightly up the stairs to convey this message, and in the meantime d'Albigny did the honors of the salon to his future *collaborateur*.

It was in the style of Louis XIII., and crowded with furniture. A chandelier of that date hung from the elaborately decorated ceiling; the *portières* were of old Aubusson, whose faded tints harmonized with the brown tones of the oak panels. There were several pictures of the old Spanish school, several more of the Venetian, and two copies of Rembrandt, one of which was *la Ronde de Nuit*, made the *ensemble*, where one Chinese umbrella alone, presented brilliant colors, fantastic birds and gorgeous butterflies.

Mulhausen examined everything with the air of a connoisseur, but in silence.

When, however, his tour of inspection was complete, he congratulated d'Albigny.

"It is here," said the Marquis, "that our winter *fêtes* will take place. We propose to give a masked ball or two, to which we shall invite the fashionable actresses, the press, all the best known journalists and artists, in fact, all those persons who have any reputation in Paris. I leave you to think if that will not make a sensation, particularly as we shall herald it in advance, and afterward describe and illustrate these balls in our journal."

"Yes, precisely," nodded Mulhausen.

Nana now entered.

She wore a magnificent robe of pomegranate colored satin, slippers of the same color, lace at the throat and on the sleeves, in the creamy whiteness of which her velvety hands and rose-tipped fingers were almost lost.

Flounces of English Point were on the *tablier* of her robe; a necklace of pale pink coral went twice around her throat.

Mulhausen was fairly dazzled. He went up to her,

and taking her hand, kissed it with clumsy grace, saying as he did so:

"May I hope to be forgiven, Madame, for many delinquencies, and for one in particular?"

"No, no, Prince. It is for me to ask your pardon for mistaking a gift to my servant for one to myself."

The German took this sarcastic remark as serious, and eager to display his wealth and his ostentation, hastily replied:

"I intend to put one hundred thousand francs into the journal which d'Albigny proposes to start. You will, of course, reap the benefit of this act."

Nana with difficulty repressed a smile, but dissimulating her amusement she turned away, and said to D'Albigny:

"What is this journal of which our friend is speaking?"

"You will find out later, Madame, when things are well started; it is now a secret between Mulhausen and myself."

Then, turning to the Prince, he added:

"Women are all alike; they always want to know everything."

"Ah! I can guess. It is some financial enterprise in which d'Albigny wishes to interest you, Mulhausen, but I have a friend whom I would like to enter this speculation instead of you."

"It can't be done, though," answered Mulhausen, beginning to fear that Nana's vengeance would induce her to use her influence to keep him out of this journal. "The Marquis made this proposition to me, I accepted it, and it is all settled now!"

"It is quite certain," said d'Albigny, in an authoritative tone, "that you cannot interfere with our arrangements. I have in my mind a series of combinations peculiarly advantageous. It is quite natural that I should propose to Mulhausen, who has always been a good friend to me, that he should go in with me."

"Precisely!" said Mulhausen, who now posed like a connoisseur before the copy of *la Ronde de Nuit.*

"That is enough! You have said enough," whispered d'Albigny to Nana, while the Prince had his back turned toward them.

"Madame, dinner is served," said Luke, appearing in red silk stockings and a black coat.

Mulhausen turned around quickly and offered his left arm to his hostess. They passed into the dining-room, followed by the Marquis, Luke holding the Aubusson *portière* aside with the tips of his long, thin fingers.

CHAPTER LIII.

A NEW ENTERPRISE.

IN another week the journal was ready to appear. It was called simply the *Gazette des Coulisses*. Its office was on the *Avenue de l'Opera* in an *entresol*.

Mulhausen had a private office ornamented with pictures and terra cotta busts, with an iron safe and mahogany secretary, four arm-chairs, a divan of green leather, and a real Smyrna carpet.

This office and the general one of the journal did not communicate. Each opened into the same ante-room, however, and in this ante-room sat a small valet whose duty it was to take in visiting cards to the editor.

Still another room opened into this ante-chamber. It was the subscription office. Two clerks sat at their desks, one of whom, half hidden by a green curtain, had as his sole occupation, when a new client appeared, the duty of noisily counting a huge pile of gold pieces, which gold pieces were always the same.

D'Albigny had his private office also. This was in the rear, and to reach it the Marquis was obliged to pass through the general office, or take the private staircase, the door of which was hidden behind a book-case.

The evening previous to the publication of the first number of the *Gazette des Coulisses*, d'Albigny gave a great dinner at Nana's hôtel to the journalists of Paris. Naturally, therefore, the new sheet was cordially welcomed by its confrères.

During the first week twenty thousand francs beside Mulhausen's hundred thousand were received, but afterward the journal did not pay expenses. The contributors were paid in notes, which notes they discounted at a banker's who was quite willing to accept them, the

Marquis having agreed to "put through" a matter launched by the banker. The management of the *Gazette des Coulisses* gained by this arrangement three months' respite.

All the employés, therefore, of the Gazette and all the heavy creditors were paid in this way by notes. It was not that Mulhausen was without money, but because this method seemed to him so very much more easy.

As soon as the Gazette was fairly started, literary débutants flocked to the office, some bringing articles, others with news.

Mulhausen received their cards from the youthful valet, and issued orders that they should be admitted to the salon.

At the end of a half hour he rang, and received one after the other, in the order of their coming, these unfortunate writers.

"We are overwhelmed with matter," he said, "overwhelmed with applications from the first talent in the market. We can positively take nothing more at present. Return in about six months, or leave your manuscript. You shall have an answer in a fortnight."

The author naturally left his manuscript, and while the débutant went out with the light of hope on his countenance, the precious package was placed within the desk of the editor.

But Mulhausen's specialty was giving audience to the ladies attached to the theatres, when all day long fair women and dark, tall women and short, rustled across that Smyrna carpet in the manager's room.

While the Gazette, founded by d'Albigny and supported by Mulhausen, was organized and appeared, Nana was radiant in jewels, and gave suppers and dinners, all on the credit of this journal.

Gold melted away as of yore, once again in the hands of this woman, who appeared at the Bois and the races, at the theatres and at the opera, doing her best to disguise the encroachments of age.

She often received Mulhausen at her hôtel, while

d'Albigny was at the club or was busy in his many enterprises — extorting money from the managers of theatres on the verge of bankruptcy, or from companies whose affairs would not bear looking into, by threats of exposure in his newspaper.

And Nana, who in her gala days had ridiculed Mulhausen, now fraternized with him, and did her best to please him.

Mulhausen was greatly flattered by this amiability, and began to believe that after all he was a very delightful person. He even fancied that he had displaced d'Albigny in the esteem of Nana, who, although on the decline, was every inch a queen.

As soon as she again displayed at the Bois her coronet and her "N" on the *portière* of her coupé, she was once more admired by Mulhausen. He often accompanied her when she went to her milliner's and her dressmaker's, and she made great use of him in allowing him to pay in the form of loans for many costly articles, which made sad havoc with the reduced funds of the Prince.

He was none the less carefully dressed and gloved, however, and, as he drove with Nana, he was able to economize in carriage hire. He dined almost daily with Nana, and was consequently very willing when he went out with her to pay for some cakes at Johen's and for a glass of *vin d'Espagne*.

His boxes at the theatres he had no difficulty in obtaining, although the journal was so new. He was seen everywhere with Nana, and put on all the airs of a favored admirer. Occasionally, this woman's beauty was as wonderful as ever, and her elegant toilettes, her grace and stateliness attracted attention and admiration whenever she appeared, escorted, as she invariably was, by the imperturbable-looking German with his blond whiskers.

One evening she gave a tea, to which d'Albigny and Mulhausen invited several journalists, a manager of a *Café-Concert* and half a dozen financiers.

In order to exhibit the fatuity of the Prince, d'Albigny openly called the attention of the others to

Nana's liking for Mulhausen, and congratulated him on his good fortune with exaggerated *bonhomie*.

Mulhausen visibly expanded with pride, his face was positively radiant with gratified vanity, while d'Albigny related many anecdotes in connection with the audiences given by the Prince to pretty actresses, in his editorial rooms at the *Gazette* office.

Tea was served in silver gilt cups, with spoons of rock crystal, which were each worth five louis, and which d'Albigny had purchased that same day, with the money advanced by Mulhausen, paying cash at an old curiosity shop in the *Passage des Panoramas*.

Luke waited, assisted by a man from the confectioner's. His silver chain glittered around his neck over the collar of his black coat, and his long, pale, closely shaven face rose from the voluminous fold of his white cravat. His slender fingers grasped the large tray which contained the cups.

Several literary women were there to inspect and take notes of what Paris called the return of Nana's luck.

One of them, who had long since passed all possibility of any such return, predicted with some bitterness that Nana was too old for her luck to last long. Wrinkled, stooping, with a pointed chin, and half toothless, the good lady whispered all sorts of wicked things into the ear of another Bohemian, to which he politely listened with an occasional bow, not daring to do more lest a discussion should be provoked, which would keep him longer at her side.

Three songs and two addresses came in at the end of the evening. To please Mulhausen and not vex d'Albigny, Nana received them with a condescending smile, and an affectation of haughty dignity.

To others, who were about to appear on the lyric stage, she promised the influence of the Gazette, which she seemed to regard as her property, and d'Albigny and Mulhausen as her employés.

When tea had been served, the Prince and the Marquis passed into the card-room with several young men.

The evening threatening to be a little dull, Nana, solicited by a handsome young fellow attached to the staff of an independent newspaper, consented to sing. A piano had been brought in the previous day. An accompanist took his place at the instrument, and Nana sang, with immense success, an air from *Robert*, and Schubert's *Marguerite*.

Her guests crowded around her when she left the piano, with enthusiastic praise, to which she listened with the air of a grande dame who makes no musical pretensions, but does her best, with her poor little amateur talent.

The handsome young man had a revelation. He immediately mentally recomposed a critique he had written on *la Krauss*, and adapted it to this great artist, whom he now heard for the first time.

About three o'clock, the last guest departed, and Nana retired to her apartment, whither the Marquis followed her to say a few words.

Nana's chamber was furnished with rose-colored satin embroidered with white Marguerites.

The Marquis pulled a low arm-chair toward the toilette table and looked on while Virginie took down Madame's elaborate head-dress.

"How did you do in the green salon to-night?" asked Nana, abruptly.

"I lost."

"How unfortunate!"

"Very true; but one can't always win."

"How much did you lose?"

"Two hundred louis."

"But we have not as much ready money as that in the house."

"We can live on credit, my dear. Confidence is re-established now. Besides, Mulhausen has had so much amusement out of his editorship that, if I tell him we must either give up the Gazette or obtain another hundred thousand francs to carry it on, he will give us the money for fear he will lose what he has already put in."

"I wish we could be done with that German; he is really an intolerable bore."

Virginie had finished Nana's head by this time, and Luke knocked at the door.

"Shall I light your room, Monsieur?" he asked.

"Wait for my orders," answered the Marquis.

Luke remained standing just within the door, stiff and mute.

"Before saying good night to you, Madame," resumed the Marquis, "I must give you a piece of news."

"And what is that?" asked Nana, turning quickly.

"Your daughter is to be married."

"And I will be at the wedding," she answered, with an ominous glitter in her green eyes.

"We will all go, my dear," said d'Albigny carelessly.

Luke was still standing by the door. The shadow of his sharp features, with his large ears setting out from his head, was oddly exaggerated on the rose-colored *portière*.

The Marquis happened to turn his head and surprised the expression of the man's eyes fixed as they were on Nana.

"Luke," he said, "go light my room."

The lackey disappeared.

Virginie was next dismissed, and all was silent for a few minutes.

"I will certainly be revenged," muttered Nana.

Luke reappeared, saying:

"Monsieur, all is ready."

"Then be off to bed with you," answered the Marquis with rough kindness, rising as he spoke, and kissing Nana's hand.

"Thank you, sir," replied the former clown, and under his breath he added: "I, too, will be at that wedding, be sure of that!"

CHAPTER LIV.

A HERALD OF DISASTER.

NOW that these two, Lucien and Andrée, had been so near death, they both gladly accepted life and happiness with entire faith in each other and themselves.

All Lucien's doubts had vanished before this supreme proof, given him by Andrée, that she could not live without him. It was more difficult, however, for him to win his own forgiveness than to obtain her's.

Every evening they went to the *Parc Monceaux*, and seated themselves by the tiny lake. From the bench on which they usually sat, they could see a strip of blackened wall, and, on the lower floor, part of a window, from which still hung a bit of an awning.

This was all that remained of Nana's hôtel. Through this broken window the same star appeared nightly.

Lucien and Andrée ended by adopting this star as their own, and always waited for it, and indulged in a childish sort of belief that its regular appearance purified the bitter remembrance of Andrée's mother.

After sitting for an hour or two in the starry stillness of the night, they returned home with softened hearts—Andrée's little hand resting on her lover's arm. Her step was shorter than his, and he did his best to accommodate his own to hers.

On rainy evenings they did not go out, and Monsieur Despretz read aloud, sometimes from Victor Hugo, that master of masters, and sometimes a *chef d'œuvre* like *Paul and Virginia*, over which Andrée wept all one night.

He brought her new books, and all the poems of the day. While he read, Madame Naviel and her adopted daughter sewed, and Monsieur Naviel, lying back in his easy chair, looked out at the clouds passing swiftly over the sky.

Every preparation was at last completed. Andrée and Lucien were to be married on the following Saturday. Lucien had obtained a certificate of exemption from military service on account of the injury to his chest, as his mother not being married the law did not recognize him as the support of a family.

The Sunday preceding the marriage, the Despretz and Naviel families went to pass the day in the woods near Meudon.

During the day Lucien offered his arm to his mother. She thanked him but refused to take it, saying:

"Thank you, my son, for having thought of me, but I do not require your assistance. Your arm belongs now to Andrée."

In vain did Andrée join her entreaties to Lucien's. The old lady was obstinate in her refusal. The two young people, therefore, ran on in advance, both of them as happy as children just out of school. Andrée laughed with a clear, ringing sound, which shook the glossy leaves under which the birds had retreated to their nests from the heat of the midday sun.

She was very charming, in her simple white dress and straw hat, trimmed with field flowers. She wore long, gray gloves, coming nearly to her elbows, and gray shoes, with *Louis Quinze* heels.

They went up the wide avenue which led to the *château*, and turned to the right and took a narrow, stony path, at the end of which was the house of the Guard.

"Oh! what a horrible road! It is almost impossible to walk here," she said, as she clung to his arm.

And he laughed at her for coming into the country with shoes which were only fit to wear on a carpet.

Their parents followed more slowly, but with tranquil happiness on their faces—a reflection apparently of this youthful gaiety.

Suddenly, Andrée uttered a joyous cry.

"Cows! Look at those cows!" she exclaimed, as she began to run over the grass, to a place which she saw, under the apple-trees, all in bloom.

Several tables and chairs were arranged there, and three cows were grazing a little further off.

At this irruption of exuberant youth, they lifted their heads, and looked at Andrée with their big, placid eyes.

The cottage of the Guard was in the middle of a small garden, planted with cabbages and potatoes. Along the wall was a row of sunflowers, already so tall that they cast their shadows on the roof of the house.

The Guard's wife came out to meet them with hospitable cordiality.

"What would these ladies and gentlemen like?" she asked.

"Have you any milk?"

"Yes, sir, plenty."

"And fresh eggs?"

"Yes, sir, as fresh as possible—just warm from the nest."

"Make us an omelette, then."

In ten minutes the good woman brought the omelette out to a table under the apple-tree, and then went back for the milk, which she brought, foaming and white, in a tall, gray pitcher. She had only three glasses. Consequently, Lucien and Andrée drank from the same one. Never had any milk tasted so refreshing as this to Lucien, and it was now Andrée's turn to laugh at him for his inordinate thirst.

This rustic repast was delightful. White butterflies fluttered about. The mother-hen, with her brood of fluffy chickens, disputed the crumbs that fell from the table with the cat of the house, while the cows lifted their heads occasionally to inspect them all.

When the wind lifted the branches of the trees, they could see Paris outspread below them in the valley; and a little to the left sparkled the Seine, deep blue in color, winding among the green hills.

Andrée remembered having come to this same place one autumn with the Naviels—in those days when she had not known Lucien, any more than to meet him on the stairs, when he drew back, with a respectful bow, to let her pass.

"How strange life is!" she said, with a sigh.

It was that same day that, on their return, her father had saved the life of *Face-à-Claques*.

And it was that very *Face-à-Claques* who claimed now to be her father. Certainly, she had strange antecedents. And again she murmured:

"How strange life is!"

This poor *Face-à-Claques* had an absorbing interest for her. She noticed, too, that, whenever he crossed her path, his appearance seemed to herald some startling event.

She had not seen him now since he came, the day after the fire, to warn the Naviels of the machinations of the Marquis against the engineer. Now all was over. The Marquis and Nana had played their last card, and thrown up the game.

What hope could they now have of preventing Andrée's marriage? Besides, even if they could succeed in doing so, how would it serve them, since she positively refused to cast in her existence with theirs, and they had no possible way of compelling obedience from her?

Mademoiselle sat thinking of all these things, while at the same time contemplating the farmer's little daughter, a child of about three years old, who, sitting with the head of the big dog on her lap, was watching the strangers with great gravity.

Lucien interrupted Andrée's meditation.

"Will you take a walk?" he said to them all.

His mother refused, saying that she was very tired. The Naviels preferred to remain with her, but they said to the young people:

"Go on—we will wait for you here."

Lucien and Andrée walked off together, and entered the forest. They chose the narrowest and most shaded paths. Andrée took off her hat and held it in her hand by the strings. Sometimes a straggling ray of sunlight struck Andrée's hair, and it seemed to light up the dark shadows like a flame.

They gathered a spray of flowers and some of the

young and tender leaves, mingling with the latter, pale violets and yellow primroses, deep golden buttercups and blue periwinkles, wild lilies of the valley, and other tender things, of which they did not even know the names, nor did they care to know. They wandered on, happy with each other, happy in the beauty of the day—happy that their future was assured.

They returned to their parents as the sun was setting, and dined under the apple-trees. They lingered to see Paris lighted up, and stood on the heights of Meudon to wonder at the strange beauty of the sight. They could trace out the *Quais* by the sinuous line of light. The sky over the Boulevards, over the Opera House, and over the Bourse was irradiated, and darker above the towers of Notre Dame and the Invalides.

It was two o'clock when Lucien and Andrée parted at the door.

The *concierge* opened his wicket, and said to Andrée:

"Mademoiselle, a tall, thin man was here to-night to see you, and said he would come back to-morrow."

Andrée at once knew that this tall man must be the person who claimed to be her father.

CHAPTER LV.

THE DEED OF GIFT.

AFTER having been dismissed by the Marquis the night of the tea party, Luke discovered that Nana was preparing a public scandal for the day of Andrée's marriage, and determined to warn the Naviels.

He hurried to them the first morning he could leave the house, but unfortunately the two families were at Meudon.

The next morning Lucien came early to speak to Andrée—he was in the habit of stopping there every day on his way to his work.

He found his *fiancée* preoccupied and uneasy, for she well knew that Luke never appeared under the roof of the Naviels except to warn them of some new machination of the Marquis and Nana. What was on foot now? What new scheme had they concocted to impede their marriage? Happiness had made her very timid. The realization of her dream of becoming Lucien's wife seemed to her almost too sweet to be possible. What obstacle would these people now invent to mar her joy?

This visit from Luke threw her into a state of vague anxiety, and she awaited his return with great impatience. Lucien asked her the reason of her evident preoccupation, and she was telling him of her fears when Luke rang the bell for the second time. Margot showed him into the salon where the young people were sitting. The lackey walked at once up to Lucien, and said, abruptly:

"Would you kindly give me the name of your father?"

Lucien, greatly startled, replied with another question:

"Why do you ask me this?"

"Because it is a matter of importance to both you and me."

"What common interest can we two have?"

"An interest which might break off your marriage."

"Say whatever you please," cried Andrée, "but let it be at once, and furnish your proofs."

"Proofs of what?"

"A week ago, you insisted that you were my father, and the former admirer of her whose lackey you are to-day."

"I repeat what I said then, and, moreover, add that Madame Despretz can vouch for what I say. She knew me long ago, and knows the truth. Poor woman! How hard it will be for her. Ah! excuse me, sir; I had forgotten that you were her son and have a right to hate me."

"What on earth do you mean? Come, now, speak clearly; drop all this mystery, and say what you wish to say. You asked me a while ago if I knew the name of my father. No, sir, I do not. My mother never uttered it, and I do not dare question her. She simply told me with many tears that she had been most cruelly treated. I asked for no particulars—"

"Stop, Monsieur Lucien, for the man who wronged her is probably myself. Do you see, now, why I say that this marriage of yours with Andrée may be impracticable? I am Andrée's father, and I may be yours."

"I will tell you what you are," interrupted Lucien, vehemently: "you are a knave and an imposter, quite worthy of being the lackey of the Marquis d'Albigny."

"So be it! I hope you are right, and, as I said to this sweet girl whom you wish to marry, the Marquis is a villain of the deepest dye. One of two things is true: either I am your father, or I am not. If I am not, all is well; if I am, you and that girl are brother and sister. Now, do you understand?"

"Lucien, this man is mad," exclaimed Andrée; "don't listen to another word he says."

"The disorder of his mind is evident in the incoherence of his statements," added Lucien.

"Listen, young man," said Luke; "I like you—a

little for what you may possibly be to me, and more for what you are to my daughter; you may think me mad, if you choose, although I wish sincerely I were, if what I fear is true; you may insult me, and beat me, and I will submit to insults and blows, first, because you are Andrée's *fiancé*, and, next, because you are the son of Adèle Despretz, and these two human beings are just those whom I venerate like two saints. In any event, you must be on your guard. The estimable Marquis has prepared some precious bit of rascality for your wedding day, in which he is to be assisted by Madame Nana, who intends, I imagine, to disclose her relationship and forbid the banns. You had best consult some lawyer, and see what you can do."

He hesitated a moment, and then added, almost as if speaking to himself:

"I have one hope—if Madame Despretz would only make a clean breast of it, and accuse the Marquis. I will see her at once!"

Then, addressing the lovers, he said:

"Have a little patience, young people. I would willingly cut myself into inch bits to make you as happy as you deserve, and you may rely on my doing all in my power for you."

He went to the door, where he stopped, and, as he put the hat with its blue cockade on his bald head, he turned and looked at Andrée, who sat with eyes cast down, turning listlessly the pages of one of the last books her lover had brought.

Lucien was standing by the window, with a pained expression on his troubled face.

Luke snatched off his hat, and walked up to Lucien:

"Young man," he said, "if you are not my son, your father was very like me, for I can see the resemblance myself."

He looked so strangely, as he stood with his legs placed so far apart, his two hands clutching his hat, as if asking alms, with his close-cut hair, his long bony arms, and with his ears sitting out from his head, that Andrée could not refrain from laughing at the com-

parison which he instituted between himself and her Lucien, whom she saw with the halo about him lent by his love and his youth.

She did not once think that Luke might have been quite as handsome in years past, and that it was the life he had led that had so degraded the man before her.

Lucien, whose indignation was excited by the lackey's words, was calmed on hearing Andrée laugh, and turned away with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders.

Luke shook his head, and went away without another word.

As he descended the stairs, however, he muttered:

"Poor little simpletons, they really believe me to be their enemy."

Lucien rose almost immediately to depart, and just as he was going, the *concierge* knocked at the door with a letter for Andrée.

The address was in an unknown and irregular hand.

She opened it. It contained only a few lines:

"I have heard that you wished to die. I see that you love him deeply. You do well, for he is a good fellow. I am going away. You will find with the well-known lawyer the deed which gives you three millions as a dowry. You can accept this from a friend who himself will shortly need only the earth in which he lies. Adieu, and be happy!

"These are my last words and the last wishes of him who has loved you without a thought of evil."

The signature was in Sanscrit characters.

She handed the letter to Lucien, saying, as she did so:

"What do you think of this, Lucien?"

He read the letter, and replied:

"Accept this kindness, Andrée. I am sure of your love for me, otherwise why should you have preferred me to the Rajah. If you decline this offer, you will appear to doubt my faith in you."

"So be it, then; we will share his bounty!"

And she began to clap her hands joyously. One of

her dreams was accomplished. She was about to make her adopted parents happy, and to render the lives of Lucien and his mother easy and comfortable. She ran to the work-room, calling out:

"Mamma! dear little mamma! read this!" She held the letter open in her hand, and her eyes were as bright as stars.

She was eager to see the Rajah that she might thank him, and wished that she could make him happy; but this she knew she could not do, as she could not love him. She had comprehension of the anguish he had suffered in seeing another preferred. She did not know that he was dying of this sorrow, and that every day the life-blood welled from his lips, staining his white handkerchief with scarlet drops.

Madame Naviel said they ought to go at once to see the lawyer, and bade her daughter dress as quickly as possible, Lucien saying he would accompany them before he went to his daily duties.

It so happened that the notary lived at Batignolles. They reached his door about eleven. Lucien inquired for Monsieur Redone.

"He is engaged," answered the clerk to whom he had spoken—a short, bald man, who tucked his pen behind his ear and pushed up his spectacles while he answered the visitors.

"And the head-clerk?"

"The head-clerk is away for the day," curtly replied the man, who measured his politeness by the apparent importance of the people before him.

Andrée, somewhat impatient, said quickly: "Please go to your master, and tell him that he has in his possession a deed which constitutes me heiress to three millions."

The clerk rose as if a spring had been touched. His eyes expanded, and he gazed, open-mouthed, at the young lady who had spoken.

These three millions, of which Andrée had spoken with such calm indifference, had galvanized the little man.

His red eyelids contracted a little, as he looked at the young girl with an air of an astronomer examining a star, and then he hurried towards Monsieur Redone's private office. He presently reappeared to usher in the Naviel party.

"Monsieur, I suppose, is the brother of Mademoiselle?" asked the lawyer, with a cunning look.

"Monsieur is my *fiancé*," answered Andrée, with sweet gravity.

"I congratulate him with all my heart," murmured the lawyer.

The deed was locked up. He opened the tin box in which it was, and, taking it out, read it aloud from beginning to end, and then gave it into Andrée's possession when she had shown him the Rajah's letter.

"Permit me to observe, Mademoiselle, that all the necessary papers are in this box. I hold them subject to your orders, and beg to assure you that I am ready to make any investments you may desire, and to aid you with the benefit of my experience. In fact," he added, with superannuated gallantry, "I am ready to lay my old head at your young feet."

Andrée thanked him with a smile, and, putting the deed of gift in her pocket, went away with her mother and Lucien.

All the clerks in the outer room rose as she passed through, and bowed to the very ground.

CHAPTER LVI.

MARTYRDOM.

WHEN Luke left the *fiancés*, he hastened to *la Rue Croisatière*.

D'Albigny, before going to the club with the intention of staying there all night, and of passing the following morning at the office of the *Gazette des Coulisses*, had given him a half-holiday.

When Luke reached the house of Madame Despretz, he found her busy mending some of her son's clothing. She was seated near the window, and giving the closest attention to her task.

This woman, who had grown old prematurely, had only one hope, one joy in life. Her heart had been trampled upon—her faith in God and man broken down in her early youth, and she had accustomed herself to living a joyless, solitary existence. When she expressed her sentiments on man and life, she condensed a whole world of bitterness into one brief sentence.

She invariably wore black, and a fluted cap of white muslin covered her scanty gray hair. Felt slippers, without heels, were on her feet, and, when the bell rang, she moved almost noiselessly to open the door.

When she saw Luke she said slowly:

"You have come! Am I avenged?"

"Not yet, dear Adèle, not yet. But all that depends on you. Whenever you say the word I am ready."

"Explain yourself."

"I cannot take a step now without your assistance."

"Mine?"

"Yes, yours."

"And in what way?"

"This noble Marquis d'Albigny—would that the earth would open and swallow him!—related, in the

presence of your humble servant, a villainy of his committed when he was very young. He told of his acquaintance with a pretty little glove-vender, in the *Passage de l' Opéra*, who lived at Asnières with her parents—"

"Well! what is all that to me?"

"Wait a bit. The girl was pretty, but she was good, which was not in the least what the Marquis wanted, who was, though not more than twenty-one or two, well advanced in the ways of wickedness—"

"But I ask again why you waste your time in telling me this tale? It possesses not the slightest interest for me."

"Wait, I say. This d'Albigny besieged this girl, who was named Adèle Despretz, week after week. She was pretty, too, and a blond, as you were before your hair was gray. Well, one evening, when it was snowing as hard as if all the geese in the world were being plucked, the Marquis carried off the pretty girl in a carriage—and I leave you to guess what followed. Do you understand now?"

"No; I understand nothing, except that you have come here to tell me the crimes of a man whom I have other reasons for hating."

"I am quite ready to believe, if you insist upon it, that between this Adèle Despretz, whose story I have just told you, and yourself there is no connection, particularly as I never knew you had been a glove-vender in the *Passage de l' Opéra*; but don't you think that other people might as well look upon you as the same?"

"And why, pray?"

"Simply that, in that case, your son can marry the girl he loves. Simply that my daughter, who will kill herself unless she becomes his wife, may live."

"You wish me to say that I have been the victim of the Marquis d'Albigny? Good Heavens! No! Ten thousand times, no! I have never loved any other man than yourself. Do you think your conduct toward me was such as to induce me to regard

men with favor? No; I have wept all the tears in my heart away, and I grew old at once on your desertion. It was a cowardly thing you did, when you deserted me for a woman like Nana! Yes; it was a base and cowardly act."

"I agree with you, Adèle. I was all that you say. And, yet," he continued, "if this story is true, this boy Lucien must have been two or three years old before I saw you."

"You insult me by such a supposition."

"Yes, I see that, but I am puzzled. The name and the description given by the Marquis, correspond with you. Ah! Adèle, your hair now is as white as mine. But how pretty you were! Do you remember those excursions on the lake, and in the Montmorency Forest? What lovely days those were. Then I was a gentleman. Since, I have tried almost everything. I have dabbled in all sorts of rascalities, big and little. I am no longer the same person whom you knew. My heart is that of a clown and a lackey. But all this has nothing to do with what I came here for. These children cannot marry."

"Yes, they can and will. I shall give you no explanation. I shall simply repeat that they can marry."

"All right, then. I fear, however, that Andrée's mother intends to make some trouble. If she does, I can't answer for myself. I may take it into my head to strangle her."

"She will not dare come alone, and d'Albigny won't come with her, knowing that he must meet Andrée's adopted father. These people are audacious toward the weak but cowardly with the strong. Besides, if she does come, I will tell the truth at the *Mairie*. I will say that she wishes to prevent her daughter's marriage that she may lead the girl a life of misery!"

"Rely on my assistance, Adèle. I wish to lead a new life. I wish to become once more what I was when I first knew you. I wish to be worthy of you. I entreat you to allow me to be the support of your old age, the father of your son—your husband, in short. Will you be my wife, Adèle?"

As he spoke, he had taken in his the wrinkled hand of his companion.

She did not speak, and seemed plunged in bitter reflection, but she did not withdraw her hand.

"I promise you," he said in a low voice, "that I will lead a new life. I promise you that I will earn our bread by honest labor. I love you now as I loved you before that fatal day when I met Nana. Give me time, though, and I will punish her."

"No; let her alone. Leave the house at once. She is, I am told, almost ruined; old age and poverty will sufficiently avenge me. The Marquis, however, will be caught, I trust, in some piece of rascality which will send him to the galleys."

Luke started up.

"I hope so, too," he said. "Saturday, then, is the great day. I shall be at the wedding, for I must witness my daughter's happiness; and if Nana makes any trouble, I will soon close her lips. I will see you then, on Saturday, at the *Mairie*."

He placed his hat, with its blue cockade, on his head, and went away.

Not long after, Lucien Despretz came in, much earlier than usual.

"Do you know what has happened?" he said to his mother, as he kissed her.

"No, I do not; but pray tell me at once, for I am ill and nervous to-night."

"Andrée has inherited three millions!"

"Then she will not marry you?"

"I beg your pardon."

"And you are willing to accept money that comes to you from you know not whence?"

"I know both whence and why. The money is clean and wholesome. Besides, Andrée, fearing lest I should be displeased, wished at first to refuse this legacy."

"And you encouraged her to accept it?"

"I did, indeed. I know that she loves me; she has given me the best proof of that."

"Very well; it is your affair. You will do as you

think best." And she took up her work as if nothing had happened. The excessive whiteness of her crisp cap and her well worn and well brushed black dress were in the full light from the window. Her pale face had all the serenity of the portraits of saints, distinguished with difficulty in the soft obscurity of chapels, but whose eyes follow you with fixed determination.

Her hands were wrinkled and bore the marks of toil. Generally, when Lucien came in, he lighted the furnace and prepared supper, while his mother talked. But this night, when she heard the fire crackling in the kitchen stove, she called out:

"Leave all that, my dear boy; I am coming; it is my affair, now. Besides, when I am alone, my cooking will not take long."

"But you will come to us, dear mother, and you will have two children, instead of one."

"No; your wife is rich and I am poor. I do not wish to be taken care of by her."

"But she will not think that."

"No, probably not. I should, however, and be intensely humiliated. The continued presence of an old woman, even if she be your mother, Lucien, cannot be agreeable to your young wife. I would never consent to sow discord and coldness in your home. I wish to live and die alone!"

"I will not contradict you, dear mother, although it makes me very unhappy to hear you say such things," answered Lucien, as he laid the cloth.

Madame Despretz arose and walked softly across the room in her felt slippers. In the doorway she turned and looked at her son. He was still busy, endeavoring to save his mother all these petty cares. It was difficult to believe that he was soon to come into the enjoyment of wealth.

Madame Despretz thought of all the proofs of filial affection this good son had given her, and asked herself, with jealous egotism, what she should do when he married.

Then, immediately, she reproached herself with this

narrowness which allowed her to make a rival of Andrée. She determined to make her sacrifice complete.

At this moment, Lucien looked up and saw his mother leaning against the door, and caught her expression of tearful resignation.

He divined so much courageous self-abnegation under this veil of sadness that he at once went to her, and, taking both her hands in his, said with affectionate authority:

"I do not wish you to be sad because I am happy."

Madame Despretz threw her arms around the neck of her son, and, kissing him tenderly, cried out:

"How can I be sad when you are happy? You shall have your Andrée—yes, you shall have her, and if any one tries to take her from you, I shall sacrifice all in your defence—yes, all."

She threw her head back to look in his face, and hers was radiant with its expression of martyrdom.

CHAPTER LVII.

RETROSPECTION.

THE wealth that had so suddenly come to Andrée Naviel in no way changed her preparations for her marriage. All was delightfully simple. The two families supped together the evening before the wedding. Andrée and Lucien had made arrangements to put Monsieur Naviel into business, and leased for Madame Naviel a shop, on the *Boulevard des Italiens*, where she could extend her manufacture and sale of flowers. The young people, however, had as yet formed no definite plans for themselves. They were to leave Paris for a month immediately after their marriage, and this supper was in reality their farewell.

After dinner, Madame Naviel served coffee in the salon, and Andrée called in her work-women and announced to them that her mother would in future carry on the establishment alone, or rather with the assistance of Margot, and added that in honor of her marriage she should make them each a present of one hundred francs. She also invited them to the wedding dinner, and then dismissed them.

She had not yet opened the wardrobe in which her wedding dress had been placed, after that terrible night when she had put it on.

She called to Lucien to come with her, as she left the salon. He rose from his chair and followed her.

She laid her long silk skirt on a chair, to take out the wrinkles. Lucien assisted her. It was he who arranged the waist over the skirt, carefully bringing forward the sleeves.

Andrée was immensely amused at this, and at his orderly demeanor.

"Is your coat ready?" she asked.

"Yes: it is the first dress coat I ever had. My

mother said it fitted me well, but I do not place the most entire reliance on what she says where I am concerned, for she thinks me superb in everything. All I do is correct in her eyes. Perhaps, my wife will be more severe."

"I may be so as regards your coat and your tailor; never for you."

"I know love is blind; that is the reason why my little wife should not see too clearly."

She turned away with a sigh, and placed her white satin boots in front of the chair, with the silk stockings she had worn just once.

The *corbeille* of the bride was very small, but every article was in the most exquisite taste.

Lucien gave Andrée a watch on which their initials were interwoven in seed pearls; a brooch formed of a rose set with brilliants, a ring and a pair of ear-rings like the brooch, and a bracelet peculiar in design, and an emerald snake, with ruby eyes.

Andrée had given Lucien double sleeve buttons, ornamented with huge sapphires of great value.

It was a warm night in May, and the soft air came in at the open window.

Lucien at first, leaned out alone, from this window, which he had contemplated a fortnight before with such intensity of despair.

One by one, all the sad experiences of that night returned to him. He perceived the very gas light under which he stood for so long. All the ideas that had then pierced his brain like poisoned arrows returned now to his imagination and worried him.

His heart seemed to contract, and the strength went out of his knees. He asked himself how it was that he had been able to endure his sufferings, and his teeth chattered at the mere recollection. Andrée, surprised at his silence, approached him without his knowledge, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked, as he turned with a start. "You are silent and sad to-night."

"You know of what I am thinking," he answered.

"For the last ten minutes I have been looking at the spot where I stood that night, and watched your window. And you, dearest, were dying in this room, while I was dying without in the street. We were mad, dear, were we not?"

"Yes, dear, very mad."

"Let us suppose, for one moment, that for some reason our marriage were absolutely impracticable—that we could not marry either now or ever—what then? What should we do?"

"We would leave our parents the Rajah's money, and go and drown ourselves in the sea." She answered very quietly, but in her eyes there was a feverish glitter. "I have often dreamed of that death. Once I was at Havre and saw the sea. I should rather sleep under those blue waves than in an oak box, because in the sea we could be buried together."

"Yes, Andrée, and our last sigh should be a kiss."

"A death like that would be far preferable to life without you."

"There will be yet a night and a day before you will be mine. Many things may happen before then!"

"No, Lucien; no human power shall separate us now. If an obstacle arises, if my mother appears and attempts to frustrate our hopes, you promise me, Lucien, that we will die as we have said?"

"I swear it!" answered Lucien.

They both lifted their arms to the sky, where their star was shining with a greenish light like that in Andrée's eyes. Then Lucien kissed his beloved with tender respect.

He buried his face in the soft ripples of her hair. "Oh! Andrée! Andrée!" he murmured; "I love you more than aught else in the world!"

They were interrupted by a long sigh.

Lucien turned and saw his mother.

"I heard you," she murmured, "and I cannot blame you. And yet," she continued, with a bitter smile, "I have no one in the world but you!"

Lucien wished to put one arm around her while with

the other he still held his *fiancée*, but she repulsed him gently.

"No, my child, I will leave you now."

And she returned to the salon to the Naviels, while the lovers remained in the moonlight and talked over their future.

Suddenly Andrée uttered an exclamation, and pointed toward *la Rue de Rome.*

"Look!" she said to Lucien.

"Yes; I see a man passing."

"But that man—do you recognize him?"

"No, indeed."

"Well, it is Luke, and he is coming here."

"And what of that?"

"It is some machination of Nana's."

"I dare say; but we have our oath as a refuge."

"Don't let us stay here any longer," answered Andrée, with a shiver. "I am afraid."

CHAPTER LVIII.

MARGOT MAKES HER PLANS.

NOT long afterward, Luke rang the bell. Both families were then in the salon, and Monsieur Naviel opened the door.

He cordially extended his hand to the lackey.

"You were right," he said, "and I was wrong in not allowing d'Albigny to broil, for, as you know, he had me arrested as a thief. Fortunately, however, the police soon found out which of us was the honest man."

"Justice is not blind, Monsieur Naviel, nor is she deaf, and in this affair both her eyes and her ears are of a very good use."

"I fancy that you may have had some hand in my release," said the engineer; "did you not?"

"In some degree, for I took good care that they should know a few facts at the Préfecture about my good master."

"Do you mean that you are connected with the police?"

"Yes—under the rose; but it won't be for long. I have begged the Government to give me other duties, and I have every reason to hope that my wishes will be complied with."

Luke hung up his hat, and entered the salon, bowing respectfully to Madame Naviel and Madame Despretz. Then going up to Lucien, he shook hands with him, saying:

"It is to-morrow, then? Look out! The Marquis will be there, and Madame Nana, too—"

"We shall all be there," interrupted Naviel, "and it will go hard with your Marquis, if he gives us any trouble. Did he send you here now?"

"By no means. I came of my own accord. I concluded that you would all be together, and that,

consequently, the person whom I particularly wish to see, would be here also. It is to you, Madame Despretz, that I wish to speak in regard to the happiness of your son. The nails and the teeth must be extracted from the people you know of—those who wish to separate our young people."

"Come into the work-room, we shall be alone there," said Madame Despretz.

She opened the door, and was the first to enter, followed by Luke.

Margot was just finishing some orange blossoms, intended for the bride's *corsage*.

"Leave us a moment, my child," said Madame Despretz. Margot asked permission to go on for five minutes, as the next morning she would not have time to work.

When the last leaf was set, she rose silently and made a détour to avoid Luke, who always inspired her with intense aversion.

She carried the orange blossoms to Andrée to show them. The young girl thanked her, and, taking the pretty white flowers in her fingers, laid them on the table where Lucien had placed his gifts, saying to Margot, as she did so:

"I shall keep them always in remembrance of you."

"And I, Mademoiselle, what shall I do to show you my gratitude?" answered Margot, in a trembling voice. "I was very wicked toward you, and was well punished. You, Mademoiselle, are so good that, instead of letting me grovel in the mire, you did not hesitate to lift me up with your own white hands. Then, too, on the day of the Review, you spoke of me to that man who is now in there with Madame Despretz. I never can see him without trembling from head to foot."

"You are a good girl, Margot, and I was sure you would become so, when I took you here to live with us. I promise you a permanent situation if you continue to do as well."

"You are very kind, Mademoiselle, but I have something in my head, and I tell you that two days will not

elapse before these policemen will have their paws on me again."

She uttered these words with a very wretched look in her eyes, and then added:

"Good night, Madame, Mademoiselle, and all the company."

Then, turning on her heel, she left the room, and ran lightly up to her attic.

At the same moment, Luke entered with Madame Despretz, who was deadly pale, and had that nervous contraction of the features which indicates great pain of mind or body.

She had been weeping, for her eyes were very red. Her hands, falling at her side on her black dress, were painfully thin, with cord-like blue veins starting out upon them.

"You are suffering, dear mother," said Lucien and Andrée, almost simultaneously.

"No, my children, my sufferings are nearly over," she answered with a sigh.

"My friends," said Luke, "to-morrow brings us happiness or sorrow, it remains to be proved which. I have just told Monsieur Naviel that I propose to lead a new life. I am ashamed to have been for years the victim of a woman like Nana, and to have deserted a good woman for her sake."

"You can name this woman, my friend," said Madame Despretz, firmly. "I forgive you, and call upon all here present to bear witness to this, for to-morrow I may not have strength to speak."

"Yes, Adèle, you will have both strength and health. You will live and be happy yet; I will make you laugh once more, for you don't know how droll I can be. I can tell you stories which will make you burst out laughing. Now, then, about to-morrow: at what hour will you be at the *Mairie?*"

"At noon, precisely."

"Very good; I will be punctual."

And turning to the *fiancés*, who were seated side by side, he said with some emotion:

"Love each other, children, as you do now, for, say

what you will, love is the only thing that is real in this world."

He went away without his hat, and Naviel called him back.

"Yes, to be sure!" answered Luke; "to-day I forget my hat, to-morrow, perhaps, I shall forget my head. The truth is I am worried about poor Adèle. I hoped to induce her to tell the truth, if it were necessary, before the Mayor, but she pretends that she does not know what I mean. Poor woman! she has a spring loose somewhere, but I will take care of her now. So long as she lives I will be her nurse and her watch dog, for I owe everything to this dear creature."

"You must do your duty, friend, and look neither to the right nor the left," said Naviel, in his strong, full voice. "You have not always done right, we know that, but happily there is One who pardons all. There is no sinner who may not hope to be forgiven; it is this that gives us all courage."

"Thanks, friend. Good-bye until to-morrow."

Five minutes later, Luke clambered up on the *Impériale* of the omnibus.

He got off at a corner and hurried toward the police station, first ascertaining that he was not followed. He at once made his way to the office of the *Chef de la Sécurité*.

A policeman in uniform and several clerks were in an ante-room, on the wall of which hung a large map of Paris. This map had upon it many pencilled signs, intelligible only to the agents.

"Can I see the *Chef?*" asked Luke.

"On business?" was the question.

"Of course."

"Give me your name, and I will say that you wish to make a report."

"I am Luke, in the service."

"Oh! to be sure! I know you now."

The clerk knocked.

"Come in!"

The man entered and presently returned, saying:

"You can go in now."

Luke took off his hat as he entered.

"Well," said the *Chef*, "what have you to tell us about this d'Albigny? What is he doing now? It is time that this matter come to an end, for I am tired of both you and him."

"I hope to have something to tell you to-morrow, sir."

"Anything new, then?"

"I came, sir, to say that this will be the last affair which I shall have the honor of transacting for this Department. As to the Marquis, however, it will not be my fault if all is not settled to-morrow."

"You have all the evidence you require, then?"

"He is very adroit, sir, but I know him now, thoroughly. For twenty years he has been supported by Nana. Her Hôtel is a gambling house where fortunes are risked and lost. To-day their fortunes are failing, and for a year they have left no stone unturned to inveigle into their power an upright young girl, Nana's daughter."

"I know all about that. I know, too, that you are her father. As they have not succeeded, they can't be arrested for that. You have not been able to catch the Marquis in any absolutely criminal deed?"

"I know that the Marquis twenty-five years ago committed an act which should send him to the galleys. I heard him tell the story to Nana, he not knowing that I was where I could hear. The young girl, who was his victim, is probably living—in fact, I think I can lay my hand on her."

"As the Marquis told the story before you, it is for you to find proof and witnesses."

"After twenty-five years!"

"If the victim can furnish adequate proof, and the Marquis can be accused of the crime, he may confess it."

"The woman is thoroughly respectable."

"Then she won't speak!"

"I am not so sure of that, sir."

"We must see this person, and insist on her telling the truth."

"It would be very difficult, sir. She has a son, and this son is to marry Nana's daughter to-morrow, and the Marquis and Nana intend to make trouble at the *Mairie*."

"Are you sure of this?"

"They have said so, distinctly."

"But the mother of the young man will not be present?"

"Oh! yes, sir, she will."

"Then she will be face to face with the villain. She will recognize and denounce him!"

"I have done my best to induce her to promise this, but have obtained only a partial consent. I hope, however, that her desire to insure her son's happiness will induce her to sacrifice herself."

"If she accuses him, arrest the man immediately. As to the woman, she cannot be arrested unless she makes a disturbance. In that case, you know what to do."

"Perfectly, sir."

"You can go. No, wait a moment, I have a question to ask. To what cause was the fire in Nana's Hôtel attributed?"

"Had the Hôtel been insured I should have felt certain that they themselves had set it on fire, but there was no insurance on anything."

"Did you know this before the fire?" asked the *Chef* abruptly, favoring Luke with a searching gaze as he spoke.

"No, sir, I did not," answered Luke, feeling that he was treading on slippery ground.

"Why did you ask to be entrusted with the surveillance of this house?"

"Because I hoped to do honest people a service by catching this man and woman at their tricks."

"You have a personal enmity to gratify."

"Yes, sir; that is true. This woman hid my daughter from me for eighteen years. I only knew where she was when her wretched mother was in pursuit of her for her own ends. Now, I feel that my day of vengeance is near at hand."

"Very well—that is all. When you have got

through with these people, you can, if you are of the same mind, send in your resignation to Monsieur the Préfect."

Luke bowed low and departed.

When he was in the street, he drew a long breath of relief.

"Upon my word!" he murmured, "my ears burned pretty well then. One would think that man suspected me of setting the Hôtel on fire."

He stood with folded arms, looking up at the *Palais-de-Justice*."

He thought over all the criminal acts into which he had been led by his admiration for Nana. He carefully weighed all his deeds and found himself guilty. What a wretched life he had led all because of this woman. He longed to reassert himself, and under the influence of Adèle Despretz become a man worthy of her respect.

She had suffered intensely, as had he. He would try and bring back to her a little of her far away youth. Together they would try and forget these terrible years that had separated them.

Her forgiveness elevated him in his own eyes and gave him strength to struggle upward once more. He felt thorough disgust at his past life, he saw clearly all his errors, and his admiration for Nana having vanished he no longer felt any personal enmity toward the Marquis, and he was unwilling to act as a spy any longer upon him.

His old generosity, and his former sense of honor returned to him, and he abhorred the duties which the Police Department exacted from him.

But all at once he remembered the evil which Nana and the Marquis had attempted, and were about to attempt against all whom he loved, against Naviel who had saved his life, against dear little Andrée, and against the son of Adèle Despretz. Then a brutal zeal assailed him.

He thrust his thin hands into his pockets, and hastened toward Batignolles, saying to himself, half aloud:

"It is all right—yes—all right!"

CHAPTER LIX.

OH! HAPPY DAY!

THE next day Lucien Despretz awoke at six o'clock. He rose as noiselessly as possible in order not to disturb his mother, whose gentle breathing he had heard through her half open door. He went out to be shaved and to have his hair cut.

The barber's shop was just opened. The two assistants were busy with customers, the proprietor was at his desk, and his wife was watering the floor to keep down the dust.

"Is it not to-day that you are to be married?" asked the woman, looking up, for she knew Madame Despretz, from having met her at the grocer's and the butcher's.

"Yes, Madame," answered Lucien, as he took his seat in one of the empty chairs.

The proprietor himself left his desk to wait upon him, and endeavored to make his silent customer talk, but Lucien did not gratify him. The barber, finding that to be the case, began to talk to his clerks and left the young man to his thoughts. Lucien remembered that this day, now beginning, would terminate either in his happiness or in a calamity which would leave him no other resource than suicide.

The mystery of his birth and that of Andrée troubled him excessively, for he did not believe Luke to be his father any more than he believed him to be Andrée's.

He did not know whether to look on this man as insane, or to regard him as Nana's accomplice; and now his mother herself seemed to be involved in mystery. What was the meaning of the extraordinary conversation, which she and Luke had held together in the work-room at the Naviels'? His filial faith was shaken, and he suspected snares and duplicity on all

sides, for this marriage had now become to Andrée and himself a matter of life and death.

He listened with inattentive ears to the thousand active noises about him, to the click of the scissors around his ears, to the *garçon* who was sharpening a razor, and to the customers who threw their money on the counter and passed out.

All this busy life went on around Lucien, without in the least arousing him from his thoughts.

He saw opposite him the pretty face of the *dame au comptoir*, and near her a wax head in the show-case—with hair of the same shade and dressed in the same way—and hardly knew which was which.

When he was shaved and his hair was cut, he hurried back to his mother, whom he found making the coffee as usual, wearing the same black skirt, cut short enough to show her gray stockings and felt shoes, and having on a little cap, the strings of which fell over a striped dressing sacque.

Lucien noticed that she looked even more weary than usual.

Her thin hands trembled, and her eyes bore the traces of tears.

"Are you ill, dear mother?" he asked, as he embraced her.

"No, my son," she said; "I am happy—on your account. Now, dress, for it is time; or, if you prefer to take your breakfast first, you shall have it at once."

"As you please, dear mother."

She brought his breakfast, he presently withdrew to make his toilette, and soon appeared before his mother again.

"Ah! my boy," she said, "I thought you would have taken more time to-day to make yourself beautiful."

She was also dressed, and wore a violet *faille* which had been in her wardrobe some time. She wore also light gloves and a black lace shawl. As she left the house she turned and threw her arms around her son's neck.

"This is the last time you will go out with me," she said to him. "Your room will never be occupied again!"

"You will come and live with us?"

"No—never, Lucien, never!" she answered vehemently.

One of the carriages engaged for the wedding was waiting for them.

The day was clouding up, and the wind was rising. Dust was coming down the streets in clouds, and shutters were blowing to and fro. Occasionally there was a crash of broken glass from the windows.

Women were hurrying along close to the houses, fighting with the wind which wrapped their skirts around them. A stout gentleman ran to catch his hat, which kept along just the same distance in front of him for some time. The trees along the Boulevards were bent double in the blast.

At Batignolles the tempest broke forth in all its violence, just as Lucien and his mother descended from their carriage in front of the bride's residence. There were two other carriages already there. The employés of the house where Lucien was engaged had been invited by him, while Monsieur Naviel had asked their family physician and his own old *chef*.

Andrée was ready when Lucien entered the salon. He had arrived before his groomsmen. She at once advanced to meet him without the smallest affectation, and he took both her hands in his and kissed them.

"At last!" he said, quietly.

He drew her to the balcony, where the two stood looking at the dark clouds, which floated over the sky like harbingers of woe.

The wind howled dismally through the tall chestnuts on the Square, rustled among the poplars and lifted the long limbs of a weeping-willow by the water.

Flocks of swallows passed, piercing the air with their sharp cries.

"It is weather for a funeral rather than for a wedding," said Monsieur Naviel, who now made his appear-

ance, dressed all in black with the exception of white gloves and a white cravat.

Lucien, who held in his the hand of his *fiancée*, felt her start at these words. She scolded her father affectionately for speaking of a funeral on her wedding day.

The work-women who had assisted Andrée to dress, and who then retired to make their own toilettes, now reappeared, Margot the last among them. Her eyes were veiled by their heavy lids and long lashes, but in their depths lay a lurid flame.

The groomsmen arrived.

The clock of *Sainte Marie* struck eleven, and the sounds were almost like the tolling of a bell.

"What beastly weather!" sighed the Doctor. "Cold as Greenland, and yet the middle of May!"

He went up to the bride, whom he saluted with paternal gallantry.

"Well, my child, how are you in these days?" he asked, and, without waiting for Andrée's reply, he continued, addressing Lucien: "I was greatly startled the last time I was called on, for the asphyxia was nearly complete; the flowers had almost done their work and poisoned her. Fortunately, her constitution is superb, and I congratulate you on this, for it is no small matter in a wife."

Lucien quietly assented.

In a few minutes the party went down-stairs, Andrée entering the first carriage with the Doctor and Naviel's former *chef*. Then followed four other carriages, filled with the work-women and friends. The sixth and last carriage contained Lucien, his mother, and Madame Naviel.

All the neighbors turned out on the sidewalk to see the wedding procession and the bride. When they reached the *Mairie*, they were shown into a waiting room, and, at noon, into the *Salle des Mariages*.

Andrée and Lucien stood near each other, waiting for the Mayor, who had not yet made his appearance. The room was chilly and very still, while without the

tempest seemed to be increasing. The wind howled and rattled the windows, a sudden darkness fell upon the earth, and crows flew past, croaking hoarsely.

Against the green background of the papered wall, a bust of the Republic gleamed whitely.

The Mayor, wearing his tri-colored scarf, advanced gravely. The wedding party rose from their seats. The ceremony began; it was simple and dignified. The representative of the law read aloud the articles of the Code regarding the obligations and the duties of husband and wife. Then, he asked the usual questions.

To the young man he said:

"Do you take this woman, Andrée Naviel, for your lawful wife?"

To this question, Lucien answered clearly and distinctly: "I do."

The magistrate then asked Andrée the same question, to which she also replied in the affirmative. Then, the Mayor pronounced the sacramental words:

"In the name of the Law, I pronounce you—"

"Excuse me, sir," cried a clear, ringing voice from the door,—"excuse me—I oppose this marriage."

And Nana haughtily swept into the room, wearing a blue robe made with a train, and covered with English lace. She was decked with gorgeous jewels, wearing bees in her ears, composed of emeralds, with diamond wings, and hanging on the arm of d'Albigny, Luke following.

"Who are you, Madame?" asked the Mayor.

"The mother of this girl," Nana replied. "The parents who figure here are only for the occasion. Behold the proof of what I say." And she extended the letter from the *Assistance Publique*, stating that Andrée had been admitted to the *Hospice des Enfants*, on August 14th, 1860, on an order from the Commissioner of Police of the *Arrondissement* in which the woman, Nana, resided: that she had been brought there by Virginie, *femme de chambre* to the former, and that Andrée had been adopted by Pierre Naviel, engineer, who lived in the *Rue Croisatière*, on the 20th of the same month.

When he had finished reading this paper, the Mayor said:

"Is Monsieur Naviel here?"

"Yes, sir," answered Andrée's adopted father, "and it is I who, with my wife, have brought up and educated this child, and if we are parents for the occasion, I think I may safely say that this woman here is no mother at all."

"And you are Nana?" asked the magistrate, addressing the new comer.

"I think you have seen me before, sir," she answered impertinently.

"Very well. You know that the law deprives you of all rights over your child. You have no claim upon her since the day you resigned her. The Commissioner before whom you made the declaration was careful, I am sure, to inform you of that fact. He told you that you gave her up entirely to the *Assistance Publique*, which became your substitute as absolutely as if your daughter were an orphan and you dead."

"I remember nothing of all this, sir. I was so young at the time that I did not know what I was doing when I gave up my child. Now I know, and I suffer acutely at seeing her in such mercenary hands."

She pointed to Naviel, who turned his flashing eyes upon her.

"I believe," he said, striking his breast with his powerful hand, "that mercenary hands like these are more capable of bringing up a girl than such as yours—"

"Don't censure that woman, Monsieur Naviel," said the magistrate.

Then, addressing Nana again, he said:

"I am astonished, after the Commissioner of your *Arrondissement* having once informed you of the regulations, and told you that you could neither see your daughter nor know where she is, I am astonished, I say, that the *Assistance Publique* could have written you this letter, which seems to be an absolute contradiction of its own rules."

He handed the paper back to Nana, who thrust it into her pocket, as she said:

"Then, Monsieur, since my consent signifies nothing, I have a declaration to make, which you, perhaps, will take into consideration—"

Nana hesitated a moment.

It was now so dark in the *Salle* that one of the *huissiers* lighted the gas. A painful silence pervaded the room, while without, the wind howled like Furies let loose. A shutter blew to and broke a pane of glass, which fell in fragments on the floor, the wind came through in a gust, which blew open the doors and extinguished the gas, leaving the room in almost absolute darkness.

Luke went close to the side of Madame Despretz. Margot, with her right hand clenched under her shawl, stood directly behind Andrée.

CHAPTER LX.

MARGOT IS FAITHFUL.

"WELL!" said Nana, emphasizing each word as she spoke, "I affirm that this young girl and this young man are children of the same father. To satisfy yourself of this fact, sir, you have only to question Madame Adèle Despretz, now present. She will confirm my statement." She laughed insolently, as she uttered these words.

Luke said to Madame Despretz, in a low voice:

"Courage, Adèle, courage. You must tell the truth now."

Lucien's mother rose and came forward; her eyes, fixed and implacable, were riveted on the Marquis d'Albigny.

The gas was now lighted again, and revealed her nun-like pallor.

There was a moment of solemn suspense.

The rain was now dashing in floods against the windows.

The light diffused through the polished globes shone on the anxious faces, glittered on the golden hair of Nana, and whitened the veil of the bride who seemed a very vision of loveliness.

"I ask permission from the Mayor to make a public statement," said Madame Despretz, in a low voice.

"Speak, Madame."

"The father of my son is not the man of whom Madame has just spoken."

"Indeed!" sneered Nana. "Then you were not such a person as you would have had us believe!"

"Permit me to continue, Madame, although it is not to you that I make this painful confession. When I was very young, sir, I was courted for some time by a handsome youth of good family, who called himself

a Marquis. This man did his best to make me forget my duty, and to rob me of my peace of mind. He promised marriage, and seemed to be so much in love with me that I learned to love him in return, though never once was I tempted to forget myself."

Adèle Despretz stopped speaking here, for, great as was her love for her son, her pride and womanly dignity were cruelly wounded by the step she was now taking.

D'Albigny walked forward, and fixed his eyes with supreme insolence on this martyr who, without being in the least intimidated, continued:

"This man, whom I was imprudent enough to let see the ascendancy he had won, was, however, unable to conquer me, and finally laid a trap for me. You, sir, will not insist on my saying more than this. Suffice it to say that in defending myself I wounded him on the neck, and I am sure that he bears the scar to this day."

"And did you never know this man's name? Why did you not file a complaint against him?"

"The name by which I knew him, sir, was not his own, and I dared not complain to my parents. Before the birth of my child, they drove me from their house. Now, however, circumstances and the false statement of this woman compel me to make this avowal, and here before you stands the criminal, whom I now denounce!"

With a menacing gesture, she pointed to the Marquis.

Lucien Despretz, who was deadly pale, started forward with clenched fists.

"I will kill you!" he exclaimed to d'Albigny.

"Stop, my son!" said Adèle Despretz, calmly; "you cannot fight with a convict!"

"This comedy," replied d'Albigny, "is wonderfully well conceived, and equally well carried out. These good people, your Honor, have evidently arranged this little plot long since, in order to blackmail the Marquis d'Albigny—but the Marquis d'Albigny is not a man to be blackmailed, do you know that, Monsieur Lucien—whatever your name may be? As for you, Madame,

your statement is ridiculous; I never fancied grandmothers."

Adèle Despretz walked up to the Marquis. With one dexterous movement she tore off his cravat and collar.

"There is the proof!" she cried.

A long scar appeared on the neck of the Marquis.

"Look at that!" she gasped. "Look at that, Monsieur Naviel; look, gentlemen! And you, too, Lucien, son as you are of this villain!"

"Tut! tut!" said d'Albigny, white with rage; "you make altogether too much noise. You are mad withal, and I advise your friends to place you in—"

He stopped, for a long hand was laid on the collar of his coat.

He turned and saw his valet Luke, standing behind him. The expression of this man's face had totally changed. A baleful fire burned in his eyes.

"I arrest you in the name of the Law, Marquis d'Albigny!" he said.

"You, you rascal! And by what right?"

"Because I know you to be the perpetrator of the crime of which this poor woman was the victim. I know, too, that you are guilty from having heard the story told by you to your accomplice. I know, also, that you tried to abduct Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel!"

"It is false!" cried the Marquis, "and you have no right to arrest me. Let me go or I will break your skull against the wall!"

"If you want a little help, comrade," said Naviel, drawing near, "I am ready, and that gentleman knows whether I have a strong hand or not!"

"This scene must come to an end," interrupted the Mayor. "I cannot suffer such things here."

"Monsieur," answered Luke, "I am only doing my duty. I belong to the force. Here is my badge."

"All right; take this man to the station."

Two policemen in uniform now appeared and led off d'Albigny, whose arrogance had totally deserted him. His knees trembled, and he was deadly pale as he meekly walked away.

Nana contemptuously turned aside from this spectacle of humiliation, and, addressing the Mayor, she said:

"I did not wish to denounce the Marquis, but *la belle* Andrée once fascinated him—"

"It is false! Nana, do you wish to ruin me?" cried d'Albigny. "It is false, I say."

The policemen hustled him from the room, but his voice was still heard repeating the same words:

"It is false! The woman lies!"

"It is not false," said Nana, calmly, "and I—"

While Nana was speaking, Margot, the florist, had silently crept nearer. Her round eyes glittered strangely. She kept her right hand under her shawl.

"Take that!" she cried, suddenly, and, with a quick movement, she threw in Nana's face the contents of a vial of vitriol.

Nana uttered a terrible shriek and fell to the floor, writhing in agony.

Several men came in and carried her away. Margot was arrested.

The ceremony, interrupted by this succession of dramatic incidents, was rapidly concluded.

When the Mayor pronounced the final syllables, Lucien offered his arm to his wife and took her away, followed by the rest of the wedding party.

Andrée, leaning on the arm of him who was to be from this time forward her inseparable friend, felt strengthened and hopeful.

Nothing could ever trouble her again. Life opened before her with richness and beauty. She had supported the calumnies and insults heaped upon her by her own mother with calm disdain. She had escaped the various perils prepared for her by a wretched creature. She had resisted the appeals of her own nature, and the instincts she had inherited.

The victory, won by her strong will and by the education she had received had been strengthened in her by the powerful example of honesty and industry which she had always had before her.

When she appeared at the head of the steps without

the *Mairie*, the crowd that had gathered outside the gates uttered a cry of admiration.

The clouds, scattered by the wind, fled before it eastward like a flight of crows.

The rain had ceased.

A ray of sunshine rested on Andrée's fair head. Her diaphanous veil surrounded her like a cloud, and on her lovely lips was a sweet smile.

She descended the steps on her husband's arm, and as she moved her slender feet and the grace of her step were seen.

The crowd received her with a positive ovation.

Hardly had she entered the carriage than a litter, borne by four men, on which lay a woman with her face wrapped in linen and uttering groans of agony and despair, was carried past her.

"It was well done!" hissed the crowd.

"Poor woman!" sighed Andrée, with tears in her eyes, as she looked down on her wedding ring, and tried to close her ears to these agonized shrieks with which the street resounded.

Lucien saw that Andrée was depressed by the terrible punishment which had overtaken this unhappy creature, whose living image she was. He took her dainty hands in his and kissed their rosy finger tips.

All the wedding guests now took their seats in their carriages, the white horses attached to which, gaily decorated with rose-colored ribbons, started off on a trot and soon drew up before the Naviels'.

CHAPTER LXI.

WOE AND AGONY.

NANA'S misfortune was irreparable. The vitriol had burned her eyes from the sockets—her nose was destroyed as by a cancer. Her lip was drawn up and disclosed her teeth, which were hopelessly corroded. And this was the end of her fatal beauty!

Since d'Albigny's arrest and the disaster to his accomplice, the hôtel in the *Avenue Freidland* had gone to ruin.

Mulhausen, compelled to verify the accounts of the Marquis, had discovered a considerable deficit, and at once filed a complaint against his ex-associate.

In vain did he attempt to carry on the journal. He reduced all the expenses, but saw that he must soon stop unless new funds could be provided.

Demands for money came from all quarters. D'Albigny had exhausted his credit, and claimants became arrogant and abusive — subscribers withdrew, and it was evident that the end was near.

On June 15th appeared the last number of the *Gazette des Coulisses.*

Mulhausen, tormented by creditors and not having more than a hundred thousand francs in the world, left France for Germany, where his heavily mortgaged property was offered for sale.

Nana refused to see any one—although she, too, amid her horrible physical agony was besieged by creditors of whose existence she was previously unaware. Notes fell from the clouds upon her, and her calamity did not even allow her to verify the signatures.

She pawned all her jewels, which Virginie carried to the *Mont de Piété.*

The *femme de chambre* took advantage of this opportunity to make a little provision for her old age.

On the 15th of July Nana was nearly penniless. Almost all the servants, scenting approaching ruin, had asked for their wages a week before. Virginie alone remained, determined to gather up all she could of the former opulence of this woman, and hovered around Nana like a hungry bird of prey.

A week later, Nana received a notification that she was to pay to her landlord the sum of six thousand francs, under penalty of having her furniture seized in the name of the Law.

When Virginie read this summons aloud, Nana in a rage leaped from her bed to which her sufferings still confined her. Stumbling against a light chair, she caught it up and flung it against a long Louis Quinze mirror, which was broken into atoms.

Then, as if the crash had aroused within her a very demon of destruction, Nana tore down the curtains, and demolished everything she could get hold of.

"Madame is mad!" said Virginie coldly, looking on with folded arms.

"Mad, am I?" shrieked Nana, and taking the woman by the shoulders she shook her violently and threw her on the bed.

Virginie quickly gathered herself up, and, going to the door, said:

"Very well. Since it is thus that Madame sees fit to reward my fidelity, I am going away!"

These words brought before Nana's imagination such a fearful picture of abandonment and solitude that she threw herself in front of the door.

"Ah! do not leave me!" she cried. "Without you I should die of hunger. What could I do if I were alone now?"

"That, Madame, is none of my business. You can engage another *femme de chambre*. I can't, and I won't, stay here to be treated in this way."

"Where shall I go to find another woman? I am alone, blind, and abandoned by everybody. Tell me, what am I to do? No, you only say this to get higher wages. Very well—I will double them."

"With what? Madame has not five Louis in the house."

"I will sell the horses, then."

"They are sold already."

"I will sell the furniture."

"The landlord claims it."

"My jewels—"

"Are all at the *Mont de Piété*."

"My dresses—"

"Are the landlord's, as well as the furniture. Actually, you have nothing, and it is not likely, in the state in which you are, that—"

"And you can leave me in this way? Virginie, you have made a fortune under my roof—your future is safe. Stay, then, with me; if not for what I can give you now, for what I have given you in the past."

"Madame is mistaken in saying that I have made a fortune with her. I have been too devoted to her interests to think of mine."

"Stay, then, out of friendship for your old friend Nana. You will stay, dear Virginie? Stay."

In imploring her *femme de chambre* not to abandon her, this woman employed the coaxing voice of other days, but her very tones had changed, and the injury to her lips imparted a singular hissing sound to her words. She held Virginie's hand in her's, which trembled at the idea of remaining alone in this house, which would soon be invaded by creditors, and from which she would be driven by the landlord. Where, then, could she go? Whom could she ask for shelter and for bread? There would be no place for her, but at the *Préfecture*, among other beggars who went there for aid.

"I have told Madame what I meant to do," said Virginie, "and I am free, I suppose. I do not choose to serve Madame any longer."

Then Nana, vanquished by despair, fell at this woman's feet, and, sobbing hysterically, she cried:

"Forgive me, Virginie, forgive me! This is what you want, is it not? You wish me to humiliate myself

before you. So be it, then; I am on my knees, and ask you for mercy."

"I have no grudge against Madame, but I ask her to forgive me, because it is impossible for me to remain with her any longer."

Saying this with excessive coldness, Virginie tried to withdraw the hand which Nana held. She could not do it, however, as her mistress clutched it as a shipwrecked mariner clutches the plank that lies between himself and eternity.

"You shall not go; I will keep you here a prisoner!"

"I should like to know if I am to be bought and sold? I have a right to leave any house whenever I choose, particularly one where I have been treated as I have been here!"

She tried again to release herself.

But Nana held her skirts firmly.

"You shall not go!" she repeated, hoarsely.

Virginie, in her turn, was now seized with a fit of passion. She bent her head until her teeth grasped one of Nana's fingers, which she bit until the hand loosed its hold, and Nana, dizzy with pain, fell back on the floor.

Then Virginie, impelled by a blind thirst for vengeance, knelt by her side and loosened the long hair of her mistress. The splendor of these tresses was still intact. They were all that remained to Nana of her former beauty. She had formed a habit of pulling her hair over her face to conceal the devastation made by Margot's murderous hand.

Then Virginie took from her pocket a pair of scissors which she always carried about her. She looked at the silken wonder of this abundant hair, then gathering it all together in one hand, which could hardly hold it, she opened her scissors, which, however, were incapable of overcoming this silken resistance. Virginie then separated the hair into long tresses, which she cut one after the other. All this time Nana lay unconscious.

When Virginie had accomplished this dastardly act,

she rolled the hair around her left arm, and bore it away as a trophy.

By degrees, Nana's senses came back, but all was dark before her. She called:

"Virginie! Virginie!"

There was no sound in reply, but from a distance came the endless noises of the great city.

She heard the clock strike one. She recognized this clock. Many a time she had heard it, when passing the church in her blue *coupé* drawn by large English horses, and driven by a coachman in her livery.

"Virginie! Virginie!" she cried again. There was no reply; the girl had gone. Nana struggled to her feet, and was amazed to find her head so light. She put up her hands, and uttered a cry of rage on finding what had been done. The cry resounded through the empty hôtel with dismal echoes.

CHAPTER LXII.

RETRIBUTION.

NANA ran with bare feet all over the house, unconscious, apparently, of the many things she hit against, and uttering hoarse cries as she passed from room to room, where her voice awakened a strange, unnatural echo.

She entered the dining-room, and, feeling her way by the wall, reached the buffet. She was hungry, and at the same time, felt a terrible apprehension that she should not find even a bit of bread, in this house given over to the pillage of untrustworthy servants, friends and parasites. In the buffet she found only half a dozen glasses, which did not feel to her like her own, as she sounded them with her thumb nail.

Her Baccarat service and her Sevres porcelain had all disappeared! She crept down to the kitchen; the meat safe was empty. Several empty saucepans were resting on the furnace.

She returned to her chamber, and passed through it to her dressing-room; a silk skirt lay on the floor. She opened her wardrobe and felt the nails, on which she found that at least a dozen dresses were still hanging.

Mismated satin slippers and boots were scattered about; white skirts were huddled together, and on a chair lay a hat, the strings of which fell to the floor and mingled with silk stockings of different colors, and a black lace mantilla, this she took to wrap about her head.

She put on six of her dresses, one over the other; found some shoes and stockings, and dressed herself as best she could. The wounds she had received on her hand and fingers caused her absolute agony, but she persevered. She knew where the key of the gate hung, and took it down.

Twenty minutes later she was outside waiting for a

carriage. She ordered the man to drive to the house of Saint-Amand, an old companion who had turned over a new leaf, and now kept a little shop in *la Rue Provence*.

Saint-Amand did not recognize Nana at first, but presently realized who her visitor was, and also why she had come. She took her into the back shop, and was really very kind.

They had not seen a great deal of each other in the days of their splendor because they disputed too much; but now, when the hour of decline had sounded for both, they were disposed to help each other.

"I bring you all I have left," said Nana, as she took off her dresses, one after the other. They were all nearly new. One of them was light blue, she had worn it on the day of Andrée's wedding, and it was eaten by the vitriol in several places on the corsage.

Saint-Amand examined them minutely in succession. She carried them to the light that she might judge of their freshness and their tint.

"I will give you five hundred francs for the lot," said the woman.

"Very good," answered Nana, who had acquired the habit of never discussing money matters. She put the five hundred francs in her pocket, and Saint-Amand went out to the carriage with her.

"If you recover," said the woman, "come and see me again. If not, I will buy all the pawn tickets you wish to sell. Only be on your guard, and keep your jewels on your person, or you run the risk of their being seized."

When she left this woman, Nana drove to a celebrated restaurant, where she expended a Louis and gave two francs to the garçon who put her in her carriage.

She said to the coachman, as in the days of her splendor: "Home!"

When, however, she was again in her empty hôtel, she was crushed by her loneliness. For a few moments, the noise of the street, the fresh air and the good meal she had made lifted the load from her spirits. There

was a break in the clouds, which, however, soon massed together again.

She shivered with dread of the future, when she was again in the house and alone. Toward night the physical sufferings which she had conquered for a time, thanks to the nervous energy of her nature, were again victorious. She took refuge in her bed, where she tossed all night with fever.

Finally, she slept from sheer exhaustion. About nine o'clock in the morning she was awakened by a loud ring at the bell.

"It is Virginie!" she thought. "It is Virginie back again!" And invigorated by the sleep she had enjoyed, she hastily dressed to open the street door.

"Is it here that Madame Nana lives?" asked a voice that was unknown to her.

"I am Nana," she answered, coldly; "what do you want?"

"We come to inform you that there is a judgment against you, and that I, Maitre Bonasse, Huissier, assisted by the Commissioner of Police, have come to seize your goods and chattels."

Behind the Huissier and the Commissioner were two witnesses and a clerk.

The five men had taken care to place themselves in the doorway in such a manner that it could not be abruptly closed in their faces.

Nana, restraining her anger as best she could, said, simply, moving aside as she spoke:

"Come in."

The men at once entered the hôtel.

This was the final blow.

They made an inventory of all the débris of this vanished splendor.

The Huissier, Monsieur Bonasse, was a type of his class, short, stout and cleanly shaven, he wore a white cravat, loosely knotted around his throat, a long, well-worn coat and pantaloons which shone at the knees; his shoes were large and cut very low. He looked like the curé of some country village when he smiled and spread out his fat hands.

Monsieur Bonasse left no corner unexamined, and looked into every wardrobe and drawer.

Nana took refuge at once in her chamber, in order to secure her pawn-tickets. Monsieur Bonasse followed her to prevent her from taking anything away. She shut the door in his face.

"Do what you choose," she said. "Take what you please anywhere else in the house, but into this room you shall not set your foot. I am dressing."

Instead of dressing, she threw herself on her bed.

Her finger had swollen since the night before, and pained her intensely. Mental and physical agony made her life intolerable.

She felt strangely weak and helpless, and lay listening to the voice of Monsieur Bonasse, who in d'Albigny's room next her own was dictating to his clerk:

"First, two arm-chairs in green velvet and ebonized pear wood. Second, four chairs to match. Third, an ebony bureau inlaid with lacquer work." The man's voice now died away in an indistinguishable murmur, as he moved further from her door.

Nana began to feel hungry again. She had not eaten since her breakfast at the Restaurant. Hardly knowing what she did, she rang her bell. The Huissier profited by this thoughtlessness on her part to enter the room.

"Madame will excuse us," he said, "and permit us to look around here."

He stood near the door. Finding that Nana did not answer, he advanced.

"I should be much obliged to you, sir," she said, "if you would send one of your men to get me something to eat. I am dying of hunger and thirst."

"Excuse me, Madame, that is not in the line of our duties," he replied.

He uttered these words with immense pomposity, and then directed the Inventory to be continued, the Huissier dictating and the Clerk writing.

Nana still wore over her head and face the black lace mantilla with which she had hidden herself the previous evening, and the clerk, who was very young,

supposed this woman lying there to be of superhuman beauty.

Presently she murmured:

"Ah! how hungry I am! Would that I had a morsel of bread!"

Her courage had deserted her. Her physical sufferings of the previous night and this sudden invasion of these officers of the Law took from her every ray of hope. She was crushed and desperate.

When the Huissier had gone through the house he retired with his men, and Nana was again alone in this immense and oppressively silent hôtel.

She had just decided that she must go and find something to eat at a Restaurant, when she heard a light step outside her door.

Some one knocked and then came in.

It was the young clerk, who carried under his arm a pint bottle of common wine and a loaf of bread.

"I have brought you these, Madame," he said, timidly.

"And who are you?" she asked.

"I am the clerk."

"Oh! yes; Bonasse, the Huissier's clerk! Well! what do you want?"

"I brought you bread and wine, because you said you were hungry, Madame."

"Thanks! give them to me."

She raised her lace in order to eat, but with such care that he could catch no glimpse of her face; but she could not break the bread, on account of the pain of her finger. He assisted her, and as he touched her the young man shivered. When her hunger was appeased she drew her veil closely over her face, and said:

"Thank you, my good boy. I shall never forget your kindness."

"But," he murmured, "may I not—"

She uttered a frenzied laugh.

"Take this," she said. "I owe you something, of course. Men always expect a reward." And she tossed him a louis.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE TRIAL.

EARLY in July d'Albigny was tried. Margot, the florist, was also tried at the same term. These two cases attracted a great deal of attention, and brought large crowds to the *Palais de Justice*. It was known that Nana was a witness in both.

The women were curious to see her ruin. They were impatient, too, to hear more of this Luke, whose double rôle seemed to the world most peculiar and needless.

Andrée and Lucien were obliged to leave the villa they had hired on the seashore to give their testimony.

Madame Despretz was also summoned, and it was clear that her testimony could not fail to be interesting.

A certain number of seats were reserved in the Tribunes for people of distinction, whose especial interest was in d'Albigny.

They had met him everywhere. He was a member of their club; they had driven with him in the *Bois de Boulogne*, and dined with him at the tables of fashionable and mutual friends.

They were curious to see how he would behave in this new experience.

When the accused entered, the crowd in the Tribunes arose as by a simultaneous movement.

There was a cry of "Silence!" from the Huissiers, and then a long continued rustle as the women seated themselves.

After the accusation was read in due form, the President said to d'Albigny:

"The accused will now rise."

The Marquis obeyed, and every eye was fixed on his tall and still elegant figure.

He had grown very old during that confinement of

the last few weeks. His moustache and whiskers had become almost white, and in the corners of his eyes several new wrinkles had made their appearance.

As he arose he looked toward the Tribunes. His attention was recalled by the President, who said, curtly:

"Your name, if you please?"

He answered in a low voice.

"Your place of birth?"

"Paris."

"Your age?"

"I was born in July, 1833; I am, therefore, forty-seven."

"You have known a Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz?"

"Yes, sir."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I was young and rich—this girl was a glove-vender in the *Passage de l' Opera*. She accepted the offers I made her, and the presents which I gave her. Her consent was voluntary. As to this person of the same name who wishes to take advantage of this accident to blackmail me, I can only say that I never saw her before."

"And yet, this woman made, voluntarily, on the day of her son's marriage, a statement which no woman could have made unless compelled to do it by the necessity of securing her son's marriage."

"Of course, I see that; but this does not prove that what she said was true."

"How do you explain her knowing you after this lapse of years?"

"I do not explain it. I simply assert that she lied."

"That is easy to say. Did she not speak of a wound and of a scar on your throat, and say that it was she who made it in self-defence? How could she divine the existence of this scar, hidden as it was by your collar, unless she knew of it?"

"She had been told by a former admirer of hers—a man who was my *valet* and is now my accuser. It was this man who arrested me. You may easily com-

prehend, Monsieur le President, that people who arm their work-women with vitriol are not likely to be deterred by perjury. All measures seemed to them good when used against the mother who claimed her child, and against the last remaining friend of this mother."

Nana rose in her seat, her face and head swathed in folds of black lace, and exclaimed, as she extended her arm toward d'Albigny:

"I am not your friend!"

The Marquis took no notice of this interruption, but continued:

"They have used this young girl as an instrument to make their fortunes!"

"Enough, sir! You are not here to accuse others, or even to defend yourself. You are here to acknowledge the truth, not to disguise it. Now, sit down. When I have other questions to ask, you will reply to them."

The accused seated himself.

The principal witnesses were Madame Despretz, Nana, Luke, Andrée, Lucien and Naviel.

Madame Despretz was first summoned.

Her deposition was brief, but crushing.

"I have nothing to add to the solemn declaration," she said, "which I made before the Mayor on the day of my son's marriage. The Court will understand that the declaration was excessively painful to me. I repeat that I made the acquaintance of that man"—she pointed to d'Albigny—"when I was a glove-vender in the *Passage de l'Opera*. I have found two letters written to me by him, and bearing that address. They are not signed, but if the writing is compared with that of Monsieur d'Albigny, I am inclined to believe that no one will hesitate in pronouncing them to be the same."

She said no more.

The President read these letters, and then handed them to an expert to be compared with papers written by d'Albigny, and taken from his desk.

After a minute examination, the expert declared that both letters and papers were written by the same person.

The Marquis arose and cried out, with evident emotion:

"I swear that these letters are forgeries!"

As he spoke he extended his hand toward the large ivory crucifix which hung over the seat of the Judge.

"Do not speak again," said the President, with considerable severity, "unless you are addressed by me."

"Madame Nana, rise, if you please," the Court continued.

"I do not know what this man is not capable of," she said, bitterly. "He has robbed me systematically for years. I know now that he has signed my name to notes, that he has forged my name, I mean. I beg the Court to compare my signature with these. Allow the expert to examine them, if you please. It has already been done by persons in whose judgment and experience I have the most entire reliance. I have been robbed, I repeat, and I have paid note after note fabricated by this scoundrel!"

D'Albigny turned very pale and rose from his seat, although the guard on either side tried to prevent him.

"It is false! It is false, wretched creature!" he cried. "I pray the Court to take for what it is worth the assertion of this woman, Nana. She came here because she knew I had quitted her, after she had bankrupted me."

"Compel the accused to sit down," said the President.

D'Albigny obeyed.

"Let the next witness, Luke, approach," said the Court.

Luke rose while Nana was being led back to her seat. He wore a long coat and gloves. He began to speak very slowly, as if to torture the Marquis as much as possible:

"I was *valet de chambre* to Madame Nana, and particularly attached to the service of the Marquis d'Albigny, who has been supported by this woman, as I

may say, *en passant*, for years. I have been fully aware of this gentleman's ideas in regard to Mademoiselle Naviel, now Madame Despretz the younger. He, on one occasion — the day of the fire — locked her in the *boudoir*, and was nearly the cause of her death. She was rescued by one of Madame Nana's friends, in whom she found a good-hearted man and a brave defender."

"Confine yourself to that which has a direct bearing on this matter, sir," said the Court. "The moments of this tribunal are very precious. Did you, or did you not, hear the accused make any statement in regard to Mademoiselle Adèle Despretz, a glove-vender in the *Passage de l' Opera?*"

"I heard him tell the whole story, sir; which story, as he told it, confirmed that of Madame Despretz. That lady had called on Madame Nana to implore her to throw no obstacle in the way of her daughter and the young man, Lucien Despretz, whom she wished to marry. Madame Nana would make no promise, and bade me summon the Marquis. Then Madame Despretz, who did not wish to meet the man who had nearly killed her son, retired. If she had remained, she would have recognized this man at once, which would have prevented the trouble which took place the day of the marriage. To go back, however: I went for the Marquis. Madame Nana was making some change in her toilette, in order to go with the Marquis to look at the last hôtel they occupied, and into which they were then about to move. While she was dressing, the Marquis told her this story about Adèle, precisely as I have rendered it in my written report."

"Very good; sit down. Madame Nana, do you remember these details? Are they correct?"

"Entirely so."

"Madame Andrée Despretz?"

Andrée came forward.

Happiness had made her radiantly beautiful. She wore a pale gray silk, trimmed with black lace; black gloves came up to her elbows to meet the lace-trimmed

sleeves; a broad brimmed hat of black straw was trimmed with black feathers, and a fan, also black, hung at her side; her skirt was scant in front, and somewhat short, allowing her pretty feet in their black satin boots to be seen.

A buzz of admiration went round the court room, as she rose in all her beauty of youth and happiness.

"The Court wishes your testimony on a delicate point, Madame," said the President. "I wish to ask if the accused was as despicable toward you as he seems to have been toward Madame Despretz?"

"No, sir, he was not. What his intentions were you can judge when I tell you that he would not permit me to leave the hôtel, or the room in which he locked me. I cannot accuse him of more than threats."

"Very well; resume your seat, Madame. Your testimony, brief as it is, is ample proof of premeditated villainy."

The other depositions were without direct importance, although they showed the brutal character of the accused, and defined his position in regard to Nana.

The jury saw this at once.

The Marquis realized the depth to which he had fallen, and knew that nothing could save him. His wretched Past was made as clear as noonday. He had long felt that he was beyond the reach of the Law, whose iron hand had now reached out and seized him.

Suddenly a black shadow fell upon the accused. He looked up and saw that the Procureur of the Republic had risen, ready to sustain the accusation.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE SENTENCE.

THE Public Prosecutor addressed the Court in the following terms:

"May it please the Court, your Honor sees, in the dock before you, a man whom fortune favored on his entrance into this world. He was born in a rank where Honor is Religion, and has lived all his life a renegade to this faith, out of which there is no salvation for a gentleman.

"It is well that those who are entrusted with the administration of Justice should speak loudly enough to be heard in the charmed circles of fashion, and say that to be a man of honor it is not enough to carry a sword and use it bravely. Debts must be paid, promises and engagements fulfilled to live with respectability.

"What is the moral worth of this man before you? To what social category does he belong? When he was young, we see that he bankrupted himself for Nana; later, he lived in the house of this woman, and was supported by her. We see how he became her prime counsellor, how he invested her money, how he speculated at the *Bourse*, how he gambled at the club and under her roof, how he helped her in all her nefarious plotting, and, finally, how he aided this miserable mother to carry out her plans in regard to her daughter —the daughter whom he had compelled her to desert.

"I have simply sketched for your benefit, gentlemen of the Jury, the salient points of his career. I have not related to you the fortunate duels — for duels are called fortunate, when a man kills his adversary—I have told you of none of these things, all of which were brought to pass by the influence of this woman, whose name—Nana—has become so widely known.

"Sometimes she wished to get rid of some admirer,

whose money had all slipped through her fingers. He was poor, and, therefore, troublesome. Sometimes she wished to revenge herself on some man who had wounded her vanity. It was in this way that Monsieur Stog, Postmaster General, was killed. He was one of the most honorable of men, and to-day his family are in poverty, having as their sole subsistence the small pension granted by the State.

"Monsieur Stog was wrong in thinking that the life of a man like himself should be risked in a duel with a scoundrel like this one, who was the mere tool of an adventuress. He paid with his life for the mistake he made. His nature was too chivalric for the days in which he lived.

"This, perhaps, is an appropriate occasion to give utterance to our opinion in regard to a class, which so many men of talent have done their best to invest with sickly sentimentality and romance.

"I shall not speak now of those unhappy creatures who, by a fatality or through a misfortune, have been drawn into wrong paths, and who, having once stumbled, are unable to rise again, and are forever after condemned to live apart from other women, and who know nothing of a home and domestic happiness. The misery of these women, their degradation and the hideous old age which awaits them are so severe, and so terrible a punishment for their misdeeds—so certain a punishment—that it is not necessary for me to point it out.

"I speak now of that large class who, by a certain superficial education and a quickness of perception and mental faculties, should have avoided these quicksands of life, but who, instead, prefer luxury and what they call gayety to mediocrity. I speak of those who deliberately select their lives, not driven into them by hunger, who start with the intention of bankrupting all who come within their clutches.

"This class has been celebrated from the ancients down, in poetry and in prose. It has been made too

prominent in all ways. To the glorification of this class the greatest talent of our century has been consecrated.

"To all our poets, to all our novelists, to all our *litterateurs*, let us say:

"Gentlemen, your style is admirable but your teachings are abominable! You render these creatures interesting, you invest them with your own brilliancy—in fact, you, gentlemen, are simply intellectual d'Albignys!"

The Prosecutor was silent a moment, after having uttered this apostrophe in a voice of thunder.

He then proceeded to examine, one after the other, the proofs which had been offered of d'Albigny's guilt, his avowal to Nana, and the antecedents of the accused.

He concluded as follows:

"The guilt of this man is as clear as the sun in my eyes, and I demand that he be punished as he deserves. Remember, gentlemen, that there is no half way in this matter. Either the man is guilty, or he is innocent!

"If he be innocent, acquit him; if he be guilty, no extenuation can be offered for him. It is high time that an example should be made, and that such people should realize that society is armed against them, and that Justice is implacable."

After the Prosecutor had finished his argument, d'Albigny was permitted to rise. While the Prosecutor had been speaking, the accused had realized what the verdict of the Jury must be in the face of all these proofs. His guilt was established by the triple testimony of Madame Despretz, of Luke, and of Nana, who had now turned against her associate.

The letters produced by Adèle were the last and most overwhelming proof.

What should he say? he asked himself. Should he attempt to appeal to the Jury by acting the farce of avowing his guilt and his repentance in a sudden outburst? It was possible that this might win for him the benefit of "extenuating circumstances."

He asked the President for permission to say a few

words, before his own counsel began the argument in his defence.

"Speak, then!" said the President.

Then d'Albigny, laying his hand on his heart, raised his eyes to Heaven, and in a voice broken with feigned emotion said, slowly:

"I owe the world the entire truth. I wish to pay this debt of honor.

"I am guilty of the crime of which I am accused.

"Condemn me, therefore.

"But I ask that I may be granted the benefit of extenuating circumstances.

"It is twenty-five years since the crime was committed on account of which I stand before you to-day. I am now forty-seven years of age. I was then hardly twenty-two. I had seen very little of life, as I had been brought up under circumstances of peculiar austerity. I was suddenly thrown on the world with a large fortune at my disposal, and became involved in a whirl of excitement, living in a circle that was at once frivolous and despicable.

"I met Adèle Despretz, and fell madly in love with her. I offered to marry her. Although she rejected my offers, she drew me on to renew them, accepted all my attentions, and willingly entered the carriage on that unfortunate night. Adèle drove me mad by her coquetry, and was herself to blame.

Gentlemen of the Jury—condemn me, if you will, the example will be a salutary one, but remember that many among you are not without fault. I was young and an orphan, without the salutary surroundings of home, and without the tender influence of a mother, who would have taught me what was right. I lost my beloved mother early—"

D'Albigny stopped; his voice broke, and he sank on his bench as if crushed by his repentance.

The audience was touched and sympathetic. Some of the women wept, but several young men who were with them were indignant, and murmured:

"It is disgraceful! Who would have believed that d'Albigny could have been guilty of such an act!"

The counsel of the accused now rose to speak. His argument was a feeble one, as he had based his proposed defence on the positive assurance from d'Albigny that he was innocent. And now he found all his arguments knocked from under him by the public confession which the Marquis had just made.

The lawyer, therefore, could only plead extenuating circumstances.

The President summed up the case and presented it to the Jury, who retired for deliberation.

Then, a great buzz of conversation arose in the court room. Bets were made on the length of the penalty to be inflicted, and eye-glasses were riveted on the unmoved countenance of the Public Prosecutor. The women analyzed Andrée's toilette and her husband's appearance. The men all admired Andrée and envied Lucien, who sat near her, somewhat too stiff and erect in his tightly-buttoned coat.

They were talking together, the young husband and wife, in very low tones. The dull light in the court room softened the brilliancy of her complexion, and imparted to it a delicious softness. Her hair, in grape-like tendrils, fell over her white brow, and her beautiful eyes were deeper and richer in color, since her happiness was assured.

The Jury entered.

The President rose to read their verdict.

The accused, found guilty with premeditation, and without extenuating circumstances, was sentenced to five years at the galleys.

This announcement was followed by tremendous excitement in the crowd.

A woman called out:

"Kill yourself, Marquis! You ought to kill yourself!"

D'Albigny looked at her, and answered in a loud voice:

"You ought to be sent to the galleys yourself, and remain there long after I have left!"

The guards seized d'Albigny by the arm and drew him away.

He turned on the threshold to look back on the world he was leaving, and, waving one of his handsomely modelled hands toward the little group of well-known members of his circle of acquaintances, he murmured, with a bitter smile:

"Farewell, my dears!"

Next, Margot's case was called. The florist simply admitted her act, and did not attempt to deny that she had long premeditated it.

Andrée was summoned as her witness and gave the warmest testimony in favor of her work-woman, saying that it was Margot's love and devotion for herself which led her to commit the act which had resulted in Nana's destruction.

Luke's deposition was in favor of the accused.

"This woman," he said, "was in the employment of Monsieur Paillardin, a man who respected no one. He died a tragic death, and Margot found herself without work, and fell into the power of a former *valet* of Paillardin's, a second-class d'Albigny, in fact.

"One day, the poor creature was permitted by a kind Providence to fall in the way of Mademoiselle Andrée Naviel, who at once took her out of the clutches of the *valet*, and from that moment Margot changed, and earned her daily bread by her work.

"The girl attached herself like a faithful dog to Andrée, who had been so good to her. She saw that Nana was seeking to blight the happiness of her benefactress. She listened to the dictates of her unreasoning heart, which said: 'Defend your mistress; defend her who saved you; defend her with your teeth and your nails — in any and every way, defend her!' She did so—and with vitriol—and I assure you, sir, she thought she was doing right."

The Jury then heard the opinion of a learned physician, who said he had examined the accused, and, finding every symptom of hysteria, felt that her responsibility for the act she had committed was very slight.

Nana, with her head wrapped in a black veil, gave her final testimony.

"I do not know this woman," she said. "She has no reason for personally disliking me. Her employers alone could have influenced her to do what she did."

After a long deliberation and much difference of opinion among the Jury, Margot was acquitted.

The order to release her was given by the Court, and Margot at once rushed to Andrée and threw herself at her feet, kissing the hem of her robe and laughing with joy and excitement.

Luke went up to her.

"Look out!" he said. "You have again been very near the doors of *Saint-Lazare*. Try never to get so near again, or they may open and swallow you up. Follow Madame Naviel's advice. It is she who has brought up my daughter, and far better, let me tell you, than I could have done it myself."

Margot looked up at him with round-eyed wonder.

"I am not afraid of you now, Monsieur Luke, and I will always try to please you," she replied, meekly.

During this brief colloquy the crowd had gathered in the doorways and watched Nana, as, erect and stately, draped in her black veil and guided by a policeman of whom she had asked the favor, she went out to her carriage.

The Court withdrew. Soon not a soul was left in the room.

Above the President's chair, the ivory Christ extended His arms in the obscurity of the half-darkened apartment.

CHAPTER LXV.

AN IDYL.

ON the evening of this long and terrible day, Andrée and her husband took the train for Brittany.

Madame Despretz left *la Rue Croisatière*, to take possession of an *entresol* in one of the houses that the young couple had just purchased in Paris.

Luke had entered Madame Naviel's flower establishment as general manager, and Margot resumed her work there.

Andrée and Lucien reached Saint-Malo at eight o'clock in the morning, where they took an omnibus which transported them and their luggage to the wharf, where they found the tiny steamboat in which they were to reach the Promontory of Saint-Egmont, at the foot of which was the villa they had taken. The villa was built on a granite ledge which stretched to the mouth of the Rance. In front was a terrace planted with aspens, and wild vines ran over the sides of the house and up the pillars on the front, throwing their graceful tendrils in every direction.

From their room on the first floor, the twain looked out on a sea of verdure tossing in the salt sea breeze. They were waked in the morning by the lusty shouts and songs of the sailors, who had moored their boats within sight.

They had hired a young girl near by to wait on them — they did not require a large retinue. They were happy and charmed with their isolation in this fair land of Brittany, which was marred by no echo from Paris.

They saw no one, and wished to see no one, for they saw each other. They did not even require speech, for they understood each look and gesture. They felt only the bliss of being in each other's society, and the more

they did so the more they realized the immensity of their joy.

When they heard the whistle of the steamboat from Saint-Malo, they rang for their servant. She appeared with two common white bowls filled with excellent coffee, some thick cream, and a couple of slices of buttered toast.

Sometimes Lucien would say to the Brétonne:

"Bring some more toast."

And she would answer:

"Bless me! I thought Parisians never ate! but my opinion now is that you have as good appetites as anybody."

After their coffee, they went out in a boat until their breakfast hour. They had hired this boat and two men for a month. The owner, who was called Captain Camisard, was a rough fellow, who made enough from strangers in the summer to take him through the winter.

Andrée wore a wide-brimmed straw hat to shield her fair face from the hot sun. They went down a flight of steps cut in the rock from their terrace; but when the tide was low, they were obliged to go some distance out on the sand. When they were fairly seated, the captain hoisted his sails, the wind soon filled them, and our young friends looked back on their villa, fast fading away in the distance. They saw the Brétonne maid-servant with her tall cap, leaning over the balustrade, her white jacket making her visible among the green vines, when a darker costume would have been lost.

Two days after their return to Dinaud, Captain Camisard proposed to Andrée that he should take her next day to Cézambre with her husband.

"What is to be seen there?" asked Andrée.

"Nothing but a rock. The peak known as the Devil's Tooth is there, and inaccessible to everything and everybody, except sailors and sea fowl. On the summit of this rock was buried a foreign prince, who had taken the singular idea into his head that he would be buried there."

"What was his name?" asked Madame Despretz, hastily.

"Upon my word, I don't know. I was told only that he came from the East Indies, and that he had died of grief."

"Very well; have the boat ready at nine o'clock, and we will go," said Andrée.

That evening, they entered the Casino at Dinaud for the first time. There was a ball that night, and they danced together, enjoying the delightfully selfish pleasure of devoting themselves to each other, and paying no attention to the strangers about them.

Andrée was very lovely in a pale blue silk, made very simply. She wore the diamond ear-rings given her by Lucien, and an aigrette among her blond puffs, which shook as she moved, scattering a thousand sparks.

She excited universal admiration, and several young men ventured to ask her to dance. She thanked them with a smiling refusal, and when they continued, taking her for a young lady, she answered, gayly:

"I have promised all the round dances to this gentleman."

One of the young men, more audacious than the others, said, maliciously:

"Take care, Mademoiselle, that such exclusive attention from one man does not excite observation."

"And what of that," she answered with some sharpness, "since this gentleman is my husband!"

The young fellow, somewhat crestfallen, bowed and retreated, and Andrée waltzed off with Lucien.

She waltzed charmingly, and was quite intoxicated with the scene. When, however, as soon came to pass, she had had enough of it, she took her husband's arm and they went home on foot through the long terraced walk just above the sea.

They walked very slowly, listening to the murmur of the waves, the measured rush and ripple of the water, and the splash as the waves broke on the shore. They stood still for a moment and listened.

"Do you love me as much as you did before our marriage?" asked Lucien.

"A thousand times more," was the reply.

"And I, Andrée, I ask myself sometimes if I am dreaming, or if I am awake, and if it be possible that we are to spend our lives together?"

"And Andrée's love never wearies you?—never becomes monotonous to you?"

"Hush! that is sheer blasphemy."

"No, let me speak. I held your arm tightly to-night, for I was afraid you would escape and ask some of the women I saw to dance with you. I saw some who were very pretty, and I was afraid you would think me ugly."

"And where were the pretty women, of whom you speak? I did not notice them—I saw only you."

They talked on in that way until they reached the villa. When they entered, they found a letter on the table. It was post-marked Paris, and signed by Luke. Lucien read it aloud:

"DEAR FRIENDS:—I hasten to inform you that we are all well, and nearly settled. There is a great demand for flowers, and I flatter myself that I am a very good Manager for the house. Madame Naviel is pleased and so is her most excellent husband. He eats and sleeps; but, bless me! what a fist he has! He could pitch all the lodgers in the two houses, of which you have given him the charge, out of the window, one after the other, if they don't pay their rent when it is due. At the same time, he is so good natured that I think he would rather pay the money himself than have any trouble.

"I am sorry to say that Madame Despretz is not well. She has suffered too much, poor woman. We are to be married in a month. I know very well that I am assuming the position and duties of nurse; but I love Adèle so much. I am so grateful to her for having forgiven me, that I shall be glad to do all for her that lies in my power.

"Alas! why cannot we be young again, she and I? You will come home for the marriage, of course. It is to announce this to you, and at the same time, to urge your return that I scrawl these few lines. And now, children, good-bye. Think kindly of

"OLD LUKE."

Lucien laid the letter on the table. Andrée had thrown herself on the sofa, and was almost asleep. Her attitude was perfection: her right arm was folded under her head, and her left hung down at her side.

Through the window, just at her head, he saw the yellow light of the Saint-Malo light-house. From afar off came the hoarse murmur of the sea, tossing in the moonlight. Then, Lucien stooped over his wife and looked steadily at her sweet face. He stooped and kissed her on her parted lips, and she faintly smiled.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE RAJAH'S GRAVE.

THE next morning, at nine o'clock, Andrée and Lucien embarked with Camisard and his sailor. A fresh wind blew from the north-west. The sea was lovely, and the waves brilliant and clear as emeralds.

Fleecy white clouds flew over the blue sky with inconceivable rapidity.

As the boat approached Saint-Malo, they saw the windows of the old city blazing in the sunshine, the yellow glass windows looking like topazes set in the deep blue granite of the façades.

When they were very near the town, the Captain suddenly changed his course and went out to sea, where the waves were heavier, through which, however, the staunch little boat steadily made its way.

About eleven o'clock, the young people disembarked at the *Isle Harbor*. They had brought with them a day's provisions, and a tent which they speedily erected out of reach of the waves.

Andrée gave the sailors a couple of bottles of Bordeaux and a leg of cold roast mutton.

The breakfast was gay enough. They made coffee over a fire which one of the sailors built in a sheltered corner.

After they had drunk their coffee, Andrée said to the Captain:

"Where is the Devil's Tooth?"

"Way up the Island, on the other side, it is said that the water at its base is a hundred fathoms deep. If you want to visit the tomb, the Custom House people will show it to you. Their house is on the path you see over there, only I advise you not to go on the Devil's Tooth with the wind blowing like this."

Lucien led Andrée away and up the shore where their feet sank in the shifting sands.

The path, which led to the house occupied by the Custom House officials, was bordered by beds in which a few puny carrots were trying to grow, with some potatoes and cabbages, the leaves of which were so devoured by snails that they looked like spiders' webs. Everywhere else the ground was covered with short, dry grass, cut close by the rabbits.

The house of which our young people were in search was some three hundred yards further on, in the hollow of the Island, where there was shelter from the north-east.

Andrée and Lucien saw a Coast Guard sitting in the doorway smoking his pipe. He rose as they approached.

"Will you tell me the name of the foreign Prince who died in this retreat a month ago?" asked Andrée, in a voice trembling with emotion.

"He never told his name, Madame. We only know that in his own land he was called Prince. If you would like to see the room in which he died, we will show it to you."

Madame Despretz looked at her husband as if to consult him.

"By all means," said Lucien quickly, seeing what she wished.

The Coast Guard guided them up a narrow staircase, which ended in a narrow corridor.

He opened a very contracted door. The room into which he admitted them was very small, and lighted by two small windows, over which hung white curtains. One of these windows looked directly out upon the water.

The bed was of cherry wood, and two straw chairs stood on either side of it. A manuscript was lying open on the bureau. Madame Despretz glanced down upon it, and read the words:

"TO ANDRÉE."

She recognized the writing of him who had died because he loved her too well.

"Will you sell me this manuscript?" she said to the man.

"With pleasure, Madame. When the young man was buried, I thought we ought to bury all this writing with him, but my comrades said no. They preferred to show it to people, hoping in that way to make some money. If you wish to buy it, I will sell it for whatever you think it is worth."

Andrée handed five louis to the man, and reverently turned over the leaves.

They were not very numerous.

"He wrote until the very day he died," resumed the Coast Guard. "He was as gentle as a girl, and, in order to remunerate us for our services, he gave us a thousand francs each. It was all the money he had when he died."

"And where is he buried?"

"On the Devil's Tooth. It is not very easy to get there, particularly when the wind blows as it does to-day. You must keep on the road that passes our door; when you come to a reservoir you must turn to your right."

Monsieur and Madame Despretz left the mortuary chamber and followed the road as far as the cistern. There they saw before them a plain, where the grass was dry and slippery.

This plain gradually sloped upward to the centre of the Island, where rose a granite peak some thirty feet in the air. On the top of this peak was a platform of about a hundred square feet. In the centre of this was a large, black head-stone, the primitive monument raised to the stranger by these people among whom he died.

The breakers roared and dashed three hundred feet below, rising like a wall fringed with white foam, and rolling in one after the other with a noise like thunder.

To attain the summit of this rock, it was necessary to climb an almost perpendicular wall. Lucien was very nervous about it on Andrée's account. He was afraid of her being dizzy and losing her foothold.

"Andrée," he said, gravely, "it is wrong to run such a risk."

"And yet he lies there who sacrificed himself for us. He gave us the liberty we now enjoy, and the fortune we accepted. Did I claim to be religious, I should say to you: 'We owe him a prayer at his tomb!'"

The Coast Guard had dug in the side of the rock a succession of holes large enough to place the tips of their feet. Andrée detected them instantly, and began the perilous ascent.

"He who loves me, follows me!" she said over her shoulder to her husband. He followed her, sustaining himself with one hand and her with the other.

Below, the sea gulls were darting hither and thither among the spray, thrown high against the rocks. Occasionally, a gust of wind would snatch Andrée's skirts and wrap them around some projecting point, as if determined to throw her down into the abyss below.

Valiant as are all daughters of the people, she waited calmly until the wind had died away, clinging with both hands to some inequality of the surface. She took advantage of a few moments' lull to throw herself forward on the level platform, when Lucien instantly followed her.

The Coast Guard had painted in red letters on the headstone the date of the death of the Indian Prince.

The young couple knelt on the fine turf that had grown around the grave, which had been hewn out in the granite to receive the Rajah's body. They could see the immense stretch of sea toward the north. Cape Frepel on the west and Varde on the east formed the bay. Toward the south they perceived a stretch of sea beach.

Andrée had gathered two or three dark pansies from the garden of the villa, as she left it in the morning. The flowers had faded in her belt. She took them now and tied them together with one of her own long golden hairs, and laid the withered flowers on the tombstone. She took from her pocket the Rajah's

manuscript, and began to read it aloud. The cry of the sea gulls was the accompaniment she had.

"CÉZAMBRE, June 5th.

"Yes, I am still living, at which I wonder, for Andrée is forever lost to me. Life is valueless to me now. I came here to die, Andrée, and to think of you. The sea soothes me; I must be surrounded by the Infinite.

"You do not know what has become of me. You think I have returned to my own land. You are very nearly right, for Death is the home of those who suffer here."

Andrée was suddenly interrupted.

A fierce gust caught away the manuscript. She saw it borne to an incredible height, the white pages flutter ing like the wings of some great bird.

At the same moment, Lucien perceived a black line on the horizon, between the sky and the sea. Two of the Coast Guard came running to them, shouting:

"Come down! come down! unless you wish to be blown into the sea!"

The descent was much more perilous than going up had been, for it was necessary to look down to see where to place each foot, and looking down on this foam and confusion was a very hazardous matter.

Lucien could find no place to put his foot after having gone down a few rods. His hands slipped on the dry grass. Andrée saw the danger he was in, and, with the nervous energy which characterized her, she grasped his arm and drew him to her side just as the hurricane burst, which had been foretold by these people.

One of the sailors, at the peril of his life, succeeded in reaching the young couple and in putting around them an enormous rope which he had fastened to the Rajah's headstone.

The black line on the horizon enlarged. The sea changed its hue and became leaden in color. The

wind whistled and howled in the most frightful manner. Grass and turf, torn up by the roots, flew past in clouds.

The sailor, after securing the rope, let the other end drop to the level plain below, and said to Monsieur Despretz:

"Wait quietly until I am down, and when the next calm comes after that descend as best you can. This tempest won't last long. In October or December it might last two days."

He succeeded in dropping safely on the plain.

Andrée and Lucien were obliged to lie down flat upon the surface under which the Rajah reposed. His tomb now protected them, and attached as they were to the granite headstone, they contemplated without fear the imposing scene outspread below them.

At this moment, they heard cannon fired in quick succession.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE CONVICT SHIP.

A MAN-OF-WAR lay about two leagues off. The sailors attached to the Coast Guard stood still.

"It is the *Actif*," said one; "it was to leave Cherbourg yesterday for Cayenne with a number of convicts."

"How do you know that?" asked the other.

"From my cousin, who is on board, and who wrote to me about it a week ago. I was on the *Actif* for two years myself, and I recognize it."

"Well, I don't believe it is the *Actif*. Don't you see how low it is in the water?"

"Yes. It is an old ship, you know, and I wonder why it was not condemned long since."

"Look at the crowd on the bridge! There is evidently no discipline on board, and it looks to me as if the vessel were keeling over."

"Well, we must see what we can do, brother, to help these Christians in their hour of peril."

"All right!" answered the other, as they ran rapidly down the path.

At this moment the tempest was at its height. The masts of the vessel broke like pipe-stems in the blast, the bowsprit was twisted off, and the ship drifted rapidly toward Cézambre. As it approached the shore the crew tried to throw out the anchor, but the chain broke, and the ship continued to drift toward the western shore.

Suddenly it touched a rock, and gave a bound and a lurch, and the sea swept over it. The men held on to the ropes, and a pitiable clamor arose, but the roar of the tempest soon stifled this sound of lamentation. By degrees the transport, raised by the waves and dashed upon the rocks again and again, parted in the middle—first one half sank and then the other.

Andrée and Lucien saw several men trying to swim among the waves, but the sea soon swallowed them up.

The *Actif* was lost.

The wind by this time seemed to have exhausted its fury. A light streak was seen on the horizon, and the clouds swept slowly toward the east.

Andrée said to Lucien, hastily:

"Let us try to go down."

Assisted by the rope which was so strongly fastened, they reached the plain and the road which led them back to the house of the Coast Guard.

Andrée stopped once and looked back on the Mausoleum, which elevated its black crest against the livid sky.

"Farewell!" she murmured.

And taking her husband's arm, she moved on as quickly as possible. Presently, she met Captain Camisard, who took off his cap as he met them.

"Does Madame mean to start in this weather?" he asked. "Now that the tempest is over the wind is favorable, but the sea is very rough. I don't know how Madame feels about it, but I should rather eat my supper at home than at Cézambre."

"As soon as you consider it safe we will go," said Lucien.

"I don't understand," continued the Captain, "how it happens that the boat belonging to the Coast Guard has not come back. They went to carry assistance to the ship that has just been wrecked. It seems that it was carrying convicts to Cayenne."

Talking as they went with the Captain of the boat that had brought them to Cézambre, Andrée and Lucien reached the shore where they had disembarked that morning. Here, protected as it was, the water was very still.

The tempest was over, the sky was again blue and the sea the same delicious color that it was in the morning.

Andrée and Lucien soon embarked. The sailors pulled the boat close to a rock, from which they

easily entered it. The sails were spread, and soon the Island was like a misty shadow behind them. Presently the Captain exclaimed:

"Is not that the Coast Guard's boat?"

"Yes, sir; I know it well. But it has only two oars, although it is heavy."

Lucien looked off and saw the boat, which sometimes disappeared from view, but they soon gained upon it, and found that there were in it five men beside the Coast Guard—two sailors and three convicts.

As they saw these faces distinctly, Andrée uttered a cry and grasped her husband's arm.

Among these pale faces was one she knew.

"What is the matter, Andrée?" asked Lucien, anxiously.

"Look! Who is that in the boat we are passing?"

"Who is it? I don't know."

"Not know the Marquis d'Albigny?"

"Impossible! You are mistaken."

"No; it is he, I tell you!"

Lucien, who was very near-sighted, in vain tried to distinguish the features of the man named by his wife.

By this time, however, the distance between the boats had greatly increased.

It was five o'clock when they reached their villa, and dinner was at once served. The Brétonne maid had recognized the boat at a distance, and had hastened her arrangements.

After dinner, Monsieur and Madame Despretz went up-stairs, for Andrée was excessively weary after all the fatigue and mental excitement of the day. She was also greatly depressed. They had not been up-stairs more than five minutes when a quick knock was heard at their door, and their maid entered, looking frightened half out of her wits.

"Oh! Monsieur!" she exclaimed, "shut all your blinds, sir; they have just come to tell me that a convict has made his escape, and is in the village somewhere. It seems that he is one of those who was on board the ship that was lost down the bay to-day. All the police are out!"

At this moment the door-bell rang violently.

"I implore you, sir, not to open the door!" cried the woman. "I am sure it is the convict!"

"You are mad!" Lucien replied, running quickly down the stairs as he spoke. "It is probably the postman."

He opened the door. Before him was a man covered with rags, who at once pushed past and shut the door.

"You have every right to reproach me, but all the same you are my son, and you will hide me in your house," said this man. "Andrée is upstairs. I will go to her. She is good, and will listen to me."

And, without awaiting a reply, he rushed up the stairs.

On seeing this man, the servant rushed out into the street, with frightened cries.

D'Albigny threw himself at Andrée's feet.

"Save me, Madame, save me!" he implored. "I will not be taken prisoner again—I prefer to die! You have a boat; send me over to Jersey this very night. Give me some clothes, so that I may not be known; hide me; do what you will, but save me!"

"In the situation, sir, in which you stand," interrupted Lucien, gravely, "there is only one way to save you."

"And what is that? Speak, my son. You ought to feel some regard for my honor, for my life, for my safety! Help me, Lucien! You can have no idea of the frightful life I have led for the last two months. I have no right to your forgiveness, but I have to your pity. Save me from Cayenne. What have I done worse than the others? All have been in league against me. I am hungry, I am cold—and yet I burn with fever!"

"I repeat to you, sir, that there is only one means of safety for you, and this is it!"

He extended a loaded revolver to his father.

The Marquis laughed aloud as he seized the weapon.

"Excellent son! Your solution is a simple one, after all. No, I will not kill myself; but if you do

not give me clothes and means to get away, I will kill you!"

He turned the revolver upon Lucien.

Andrée threw herself before her husband, and fixed her flashing eyes on the bandit.

"Coward!" she cried. "Murder us both, if you will, since you are too base to do the only thing left for you to do. If Lucien yields to your threats, I shall cease to love him!"

Lucien pushed her gently aside.

"Fire, if you choose! One crime more will entitle you to the guillotine. Fire, I tell you! You have closed my heart to pity. I might possibly have listened to you, but now it is useless for you to say another word!"

"Ah! you desert me, then, like everybody else! Very well; you shall pay for this!"

There was a report. The ball grazed Lucien's cheek and broke one of the windows. Then, the young man rushed on his father to disarm him. At the same moment, Madame Despretz seized his wrist with both her hands.

But d'Albigny shook himself free.

"Let me go!" he cried, "or I shall kill your wife!"

He fired.

The ball went out through the open door of the chamber, and was flattened against the wall of the staircase.

This report was followed by one still louder.

D'Albigny uttered a terrible cry and fell back

A gendarme appeared with his gun in his hand, followed by another.

They raised the escaped criminal from the floor. Between his eyes there was a round hole, where the ball had hit him.

The mouth was convulsed, and the eyes open and fixed.

"The fellow is dead!" muttered one of the men.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

EPILOGUE.

NANA sold to Saint-Amand all that remained to her—her last dresses, her linen and her pawn tickets, receiving for the whole several thousand francs, and established herself in a Hôtel Garnie in *la Rue Lafayette*.

She had a dressing-room and a bed-room at eighty francs per month, and ordered every day an excellent dinner, for which she paid five louis, monthly.

She did not rise until four o'clock, and did not breakfast. She took no pains to invest her small capital, but kept in her room all the money she had. She rarely went out.

Life, robust and obstinate, still maintained its sway in this woman. Her muscles strengthened for resistance; all her superb strength was concentrated to defy that decrepitude which had not yet encroached upon the beauty of her figure.

The wounds on her face had healed, but her incomparable loveliness had given place to the most repulsive ugliness. Her physical sufferings had diminished, although at times there was such intense agony in her face, that she could not sleep.

Her finger was still helpless; she wore her hair short and frizzed. When she went out at twilight to get a breath of fresh air in the *Parc Monceaux*, she covered her face with a black velvet mask. The people in the vicinity all knew now who she was, but she went by the name of the masked lady.

She had a startlingly lugubrious air, gliding by like a phantom, wearing a black robe which, from habit, she lifted with her old haughty grace. She invariably appeared with a lace mantilla over her head, which nearly covered her mask.

She was always accompanied by a *garçon* from the house in which she resided. He placed her in a chair, and returned for her at the hour she designated.

The first day she went to the Park, all the children fled from her in terror, but they soon became accustomed to seeing her. They heard their elders talk of her, and they began to pity her. Their parents, who gossiped about her, shared this pity, for, deserved as were her misfortunes, it was impossible to see this human ruin without a feeling of compassion.

The good bourgeoises, who assembled here to talk of their little household affairs or complain of their husbands, interrupted their gossip to whisper to each other:

"Look at that woman in black—it is Nana!"

Nana! That name awakened in their imaginations visions of the wildest extravagance and luxury. Nana in their eyes was fallen royalty, a dethroned Queen, dethroned by the uprising of good people. Nana's catastrophe, was the downfall of recklessness and prodigality, the bankruptcy of wrong. And these women, who were charitable and kind, felt a sad commiseration at the depth of this misfortune, which, in less than a year, had made of this sovereign of a certain class—of this power in the land—an infirm, blind, old woman, repulsive in appearance, and dependent on the assistance of a *garçon* of her Hôtel before she could breathe this dusty air, amid the turbulent gayety of a public square.

One day, Nana was awakened at six o'clock by the sound of cannon.

Just outside her door, in the corridor, the *garçon* was blacking the boots belonging to the various rooms.

Nana rose, and opened her door.

"What is going on?" she asked. "Why are they firing those cannon?"

"To-day is *La Sainte République*—the fête of the 14th of July."

"*Vive l'Empereur!*" shouted three or four women, who were in their rooms with their doors partially open.

"Hush! you will have the police in here!" said the *garçon*.

At the word police, the women were as silent as the grave.

Nana went back to bed and to sleep again. She had a frightful dream. She saw d'Albigny in his convict's dress, a green cap on his head and a ball fastened to his leg. He reproached her for having betrayed him, and for being the cause of his condemnation. He then violently seized her and bound her to her bed — her old one, over which the silver eagle had mounted guard — and around this bed he piled her dresses, laces, shawls and furs, and, when they rose nearly to the ceiling, he set fire to them and went away, leaving Nana helpless and alone.

She heard in her dream his receding step, its inequality and the heavy ball dragging over the floor.

Then she felt the heat of the flames mounting around her. She saw the great eagle gradually melt; its head drooped toward her, and its silver tears dropped on her burning eyelids.

The noise of a quarrel in the next room freed her from this nightmare. From the street came the tumult of a gathering crowd.

Flags decorated all the houses, floating from the windows of the *rez-de-chaussée* up to the very roof, a blaze of radiant color.

Platforms were raised for open air concerts, around which good-natured crowds had gathered in their Sunday clothes, who cheerfully moved aside to let women and children pass. Young girls wore tricolored ribbons in their hair, and the men had commemorative medals hung to their breasts by tricolored favors.

Toward evening, the popular enthusiasm became immense. The houses were illuminated, and on all the highest points fireworks were set off. Patriotic songs were heard; the *Marseillaise* and the *Chant du Départ* rose in chorus from the crowd, and were re-echoed from the domes, from the church steeples, from the *Louvre*, and the square towers of *Notre-Dame*, and from the round ones of *Saint Sulpice*.

There was no disorder in the crowd, which seemed made up of happy people, who showed the greatest

respect to women and children and a determination to make this celebration all that it ought to be.

The women kept as closely as possible to their husbands, and held by the hand such of their children as could walk, while the fathers bore, perched on their shoulders, the youngest born, who applauded with their tiny hands when groups of young men passed waving flags and singing the *Marseillaise*.

The *Marsellaise* came from all quarters, sweeping down like a flight of liberated song birds. It burst out on the *Place de la Bastille*, and, following the Boulevards like a train of powder, was lighted again on the *Place de la Concorde*, ascending the *Champs-Elysées* to the *Arc de Triomphe*.

The crowd shouted

"Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé."

And the great hymn arose with a formidable crescendo to the skies above.

It was no longer War that the people sang, it was Liberty, Brotherhood, and the affirmation of their faith in human justice, of their belief in the dignity of labor and of their love of Peace, not of Peace at any price—but of a proud and dignified Peace—defended if needs be unto death by these millions of men.

Nana wished to go to the Park and rang for the *garçon* to take her there. But, this evening, all the servants had gone out.

Then she determined to go alone. She stumbled along, sad and lonely amid this universal joy.

She understood none of the sweet impulses which moved the people, and when she was lightly jostled by a band of young mechanics who were singing as they walked rapidly along, she turned her masked face toward them with the exclamation:

"Beasts!"

They halted, stung by the insult, but were more disposed to laughter than to anger, and, taking each other by the hands, they formed a circle and danced around her until they were tired. Then they asked her to take

off her mask, declaring that they would have a kiss to take away the taste of the epithet she had addressed to them. She resisted and defended herself with the ferocity of a wild beast.

"Take off her mask!" sneered one voice; "it may be the Empress, for all you know."

"No masks here!" they cried. "Every face must be uncovered! Why does she hide herself, and then insult the people?"

A tall lad of about fifteen snatched at the mask and tore it off. The hideous face of Nana appeared under the gas-light like the face of a leper at a fête of the Middle Ages.

"You are cowards to insult a blind woman in this way!" she cried, in her rage at being unmasked thus publicly and displayed in her revolting ugliness. "Yes, you are cowards!" she repeated, "and the proof is that not one of you will dare to kiss me now!"

A great silence fell on the crowd. The young men, ashamed and distressed at having caused this humiliation to a woman, crowded around Nana and implored her pardon. One of them offered to tie on her mask, but no one accepted the challenge she had offered.

"You know who I am now, I see, and are ready enough to ask my pardon," she said.

"Whosoever you may be, Madame, you need not be afraid of any further annoyance from us. We will take you home, if you wish us to do so."

"Many thanks—no—I have had quite enough of you. I only ask now that you shall keep away from me. I was born in the mire, and grew up I know not how. I had a palace a year ago, while you were starving. Will you kiss me? I am she whose kisses were once worth a million—I am Nana!"

Profound stupefaction was depicted on the faces around her. They stood in silence while she passed through their midst and disappeared.

"Poor soul!" murmured an old man, who had stopped to witness this scene.

Nana reached the corner of *la Rue Lafayette* and the

Boulevard Haussmann, where a *fête champêtre* was going on under the trees. There were stalls and booths, and at one end an orchestra was playing waltzes to which young men in uniform were dancing with the pretty daughters of the people.

Nana followed the sidewalk, guided by her parasol, the end of which she kept against the wall. She began to think of her former fêtes, of the Eastern perfumes which exhaled from her *cassolettes*, of her golden lamps encrusted with precious stones, and of the mantel in her boudoir all of crystal, with her cipher in silver, surmounted by a coronet of brilliant topazes.

She saw again her lackeys, her negroes and her gorilla, that poor Yorick who had been killed in her defence.

She would have given all that remained to her of her desolate existence for one hour of that mad gayety, for one hour of her former luxury.

She remembered with rage the insult she had just received, and how not one of those youths was inclined to accept the challenge she had flung to them.

She wandered among the crowd absorbed in these thoughts, listening to the *Marseillaise* still ringing out clear and shrill, and in the intervals she heard the gay music, the polkas and popular waltzes of the day.

At the end of the *Boulevard Haussmann* she turned into *la Rue Taitbout*, then, mechanically, without in the least knowing where she was going, she turned into *la Rue Lafayette*, and followed it until she reached *la Rue de Provence*.

Here she found the street deserted, scarcely a sound of the *fête* reaching it. She did not know where she was, and, as no one passed, it was impossible to ask her way.

She walked on, therefore, still guiding herself by her parasol.

She moved with unusual rapidity, spurred on by her natural fearlessness, her nerves still tingling with excitement.

Suddenly, she hit some obstacle which seemed to her

a board, placed horizontally about the height of her waist.

The board yielded at one end, and Nana, thrown forward, extended her arms to save herself.

She felt that she was falling.

Where? She knew not!

The board, loosened by her weight, seemed to be suspended over vacancy.

And, falling with outstretched arms, Nana succeeded in catching it, and hung by both hands over an unknown depth.

What danger was this that threatened her? She had no idea.

She felt only that there was nothing under her feet, and that around her was utter silence.

Occasionally, she heard faint echoes of the music and of voices.

She called, again and again: "Help! Help!"

A window opened, and she redoubled her cries.

The window closed. Probably some one was coming to her assistance.

She waited impatiently. It seemed to her that the window she had heard was on the second floor; it was necessary, therefore, that her preserver should come down the stairs and awaken the *concierge*.

She counted each moment.

"He will want," she said, "one minute to run down the stairs, another to awaken the *concierge*, and two more to get here. I will give him five minutes. In five minutes I shall be saved!"

It never occurred to her for these five minutes to doubt that assistance was on its way to her. But she felt that she could not endure this fatigue much longer. She tried to swing herself toward the edge of the excavation, and, finally, succeeded in feeling against her knee that portion of the sidewalk which made one side of the hole over which she was suspended. She realized that here was her only safety, and, if some one would now extend to her a helping hand, she could easily be assisted to the sidewalk.

But where was the man whom she had heard at the window? Then she called again:

"Help! Help!" in a voice that was weak with fright. But no one heard her.

She struggled once more, but she felt that her strength was going. If she could only get her knees up on the board!

Finally, she succeeded in placing one foot there, then a knee, and then the other, clutching the rough board with her delicate hands, which were now cramped and nearly helpless.

At this moment, she heard footsteps running on the opposite side of the street.

"Here!" she groaned; "for the love of Heaven, come here! Come and help me!"

The footsteps stopped. Evidently she was heard.

"Help!" she cried once more, "Help!"

She heard a voice.

"No; you can't deceive me," it said. "I am not the person to play a practical joke upon!"

And the footsteps ran rapidly on, soon dying away.

It was impossible for Nana to remain all night in this situation. She felt the most agonizing pains in her back and hips. There was a strange rushing sound in her ears. Her fingers were utterly numb, and suddenly relaxed their hold. She now hung head downward.

Her consciousness of her inability to escape from her position, which was at once ridiculous and horrible, aggravated her terror and overcame her with despair. She began to be afraid of the death which she felt to be inevitable.

And no one came!

The attraction of the Boulevards had drawn every one from the smaller streets.

It seemed to her that all the blood in her body was going into her head. She allowed herself to fall; her skirts were massed under her head, and this broke the shock. She lay for a time almost stunned, but not fainting, and fully conscious of her state, but she had not strength to rise.

She soon decided what the place was into which she had fallen. It was a sewer in process of repair.

At this moment, rain began to fall, and poured into the opening into which Nana had slipped. She was cold to the very marrow of her bones, and her teeth chattered.

All the recollections of her past life crowded about her.

She remembered the time when admirers thronged around her, when Stog died in her house, when Prince Mulhausen was bankrupted by her, when the Rajah lighted her candelabras with thousand franc notes, and when the old King racked his poor brain to find amusements for her.

In those old days, when she drove up the *Champs Elysées*, lying back in her blue landau with its silver trimmings, the people all stopped to look at her, and the most distinguished men of the time fought for the honor of assisting her to alight from her carriage.

In the evening, when she entered a theatre, the whole house rose and levelled their lorgnettes at her. Her smile was sunshine and her nod an honor.

And those dainty suppers she gave, the story of which ran all over Europe! Where had this dream fled? Where had all this luxury vanished? It had all come to an end—and such an end!

Once she had sneered at the people and crushed them with her insolence. And now, on this great fête, while she lay dying in this wretched hole, the sewer of a great city — the people were dancing! Her chastisement was the triumph of good women, their protest against her career.

She heard once more joyous outcries, the *Marseillaise*, and, above all, the strains of the waltz to which the feet of the dancers were keeping time.

Suddenly, she felt against her feet a cold, thick liquid, which came higher and higher, lifting her from where she lay.

This was death! She was to die in this horrible mud. She struggled to her feet, and once more called for aid.

On her left she heard a body of men approaching. She heard them above the sound of the rain and the water pouring in from the gutter near by. The water was now less thick but more rapid.

Nana could struggle no longer. The torrent lifted her helpless form and dashed it against the stone sides of the sewer.

Bitter as her life had been of late, she still clung to it with desperation. She recalled the daily dinner, the laughter around the table, and the voice of the *garçon* who usually accompanied her to the Park.

Then all at once her memory brought up before her her far away youth. She remembered Luke, whose pale face haunted her like a vision of death. She saw him in his clown's dress, as at *Saint-Cloud*. Through the obscurity she cried out:

"Luke! come and help me! Ah! this is terrible! To die like this!"

By this time she was delirious, and it seemed to her that she was answered by Luke's voice:

"You have fallen, woman, where you and all like you should fall—into the common sewer—and be washed away!"

"I cannot die!" she moaned. "Oh! I cannot die in this way!"

There was a brief silence. Then her voice broke the stillness again:

"Virginie! Virginie! Come here, quick! My bath is too cold—much too cold!"

Her struggles became weaker; the current now growing stronger swept her on—on!

Her dead body swirled about, dashed against the walls of her prison, and, finally, lay among all the other refuse of this great city.

THE END.

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